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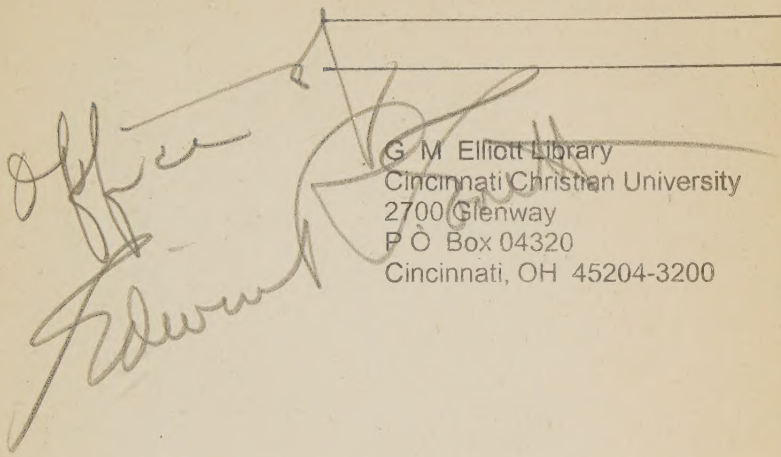

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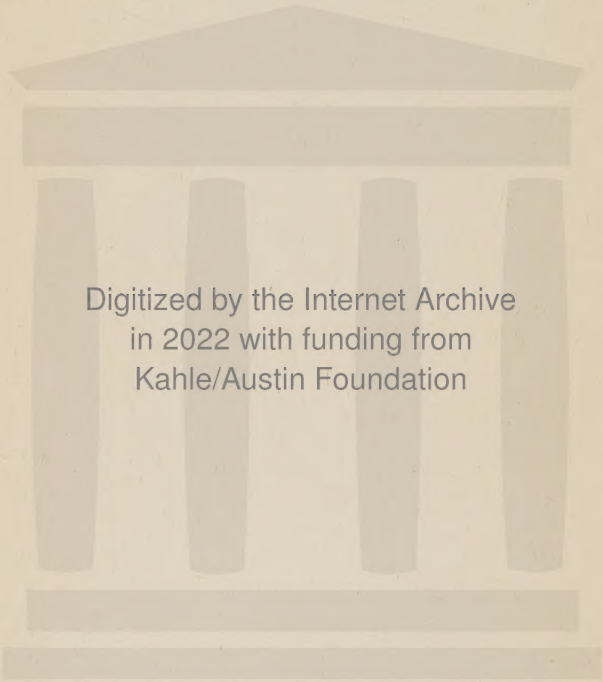

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Rev. WILLIAM M. TAYLOR, DD., LL.D.

PAUL, THE MISSIONARY

By REV. W. M. TAYLOR, DD., LL.D.

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PAUL
THE MISSIONARY

BY

REV. WILLIAM M. TAYLOR, DD., LL.D.

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PREFACE.

THE life of Paul must always be a subject of deepest interest to the Christian student; and in recent years many admirable works—conspicuously those of Conybeare and Howson, Lewin and Farrar—have been devoted to its elucidation. The present volume, however, does not come into competition with any one of these, for the author has specially aimed at pointing the practical lessons for modern life which are suggested by the personal experiences and missionary labors of the Great Apostle, and that is a department which has heretofore been too largely neglected. He has, indeed, availed himself of every means at his disposal for the illustration of the narrative, but his great design has been to show what the precept of Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," means here and now for us; and his prayer is that God may bless these discourses to the furtherance of the study of the New Testament Scriptures, and to the fostering of a more earnest missionary spirit among the members of the Christian Churches in the land.

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PAUL, THE MISSIONARY

PAUL THE MISSIONARY.

I.

STEPHEN.

Acts vi., vii.

THE Book of the Acts of the Apostles was composed by Luke as a supplementary treatise to the Gospel which goes by his name. His design in the earlier production was to record "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which he was taken up."* His purpose in the latter was to set forth what the Lord continued to do on the earth, through the effusion of his Spirit upon his apostles and disciples. The story divides itself naturally into two parts. The central figure in the first is Peter, the "apostle of the circumcision;" that in the second is Paul, the "apostle of the Gentiles." The boundary line between these two sections, indeed, is not sharply or distinctly defined, for the one overlaps the other; and we have important scenes in the life of Peter introduced after the first appearance of Paul in the narrative. But this feature of the written record only corresponds to the relations of the two apostles themselves to each other; for while Peter's labors were specially among the Jews, he was the

* Acts i., 1.

first to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles; and while Paul's great work was among the Gentiles, he invariably made the synagogue of the Jews his base of operations in seeking the evangelization of the Gentiles.

In the first portion of the history our attention is mainly confined to events that happened in Jerusalem, which was the cradle of the infant church; and that city was the scene of the tragedy which we propose to bring before you now, as the proper introduction to the life of Paul. After the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost, consequent on the ascension of the Lord, the company of believers continued for some years in visible incorporation with the Jewish Church. They formed, indeed, in many respects, a community by themselves, meeting statedly for worship and fellowship, in private houses, and in convenient public places;* having a common fund for their support;† and conspicuous for the purity and elevation of their lives.‡ But they had not formally broken away from the ritual of Moses. They conformed to all the customs of the Jews; going up to the Temple at the hour of prayer,§ and keeping strictly by the law which had been given to their fathers. Hence, at first, they were not assailed with implacable animosity. The Sadducees, indeed, who did not believe in a resurrection, or in angels, or in spirit,‖ were greatly exasperated at their proclamation of the resurrection of Christ, and on two separate occasions attempted to silence the apostles;¶ but the advice of the cautious Gamaliel prevailed over their violence, and for a season persecution was arrested. When, however, in the development of the principles of the Lord Jesus, the apostles and their coadjutors began to speak of

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* Acts ii., 46; iii., 11; iv., 31.
† Acts ii., 44; iv., 32–35.
‡ Acts ii., 42, 47.
§ Acts iii., 1.
‖ Acts xxiii., 8.
¶ Acts iv., 16–21; v., 17, 18, 28.

the law of Moses as a temporary thing which was to be absorbed in, and superseded by a spiritual and enduring system, the Pharisees and Sadducees combined to crush them, and had not their doctrines partaken of the indestructibility of God they would undoubtedly have been exterminated. The collision was occasioned by the zeal and ability of the man who first fell a victim to its severity; and that we may fully understand the case, it is needful that we go somewhat minutely into detail.

In Jerusalem—head-quarters as it was of the Jewish worship—there were many Israelites who had been born in the foreign cities, to which, after the Dispersion, the chosen people had repaired in large numbers. Naturally, those who had come from the same district drew together and formed separate synagogues; just as among ourselves we have churches known as Scotch or Irish connected with the same denomination. The Alexandrian Jews met in the synagogue of the Alexandrians; those from Cyrene in that of the Cyrenians; while the freedmen who had been emancipated from Roman slavery assembled in that of the Libertines. Now, from among this Greek-born element of the population of Jerusalem, a considerable number, of whom many were widows, joined the company of believers. These persons, according to the plan which had been adopted, were entitled to be supported out of the common fund; but the apostles could not look after everything; and those to whom they had intrusted the duty of dividing the money had very likely shown some partiality in its distribution. It was, at least, alleged by the Hellenists that their widows "had been neglected in the daily ministrations;" and to remove all cause of complaint, the apostles took immediate steps to secure the election by the believers themselves of seven men, whom they ordained, with prayer and the laying on of hands, to the work of "serving tables." It is worthy

of note, as an incidental indication of the conciliatory spirit by which the Jewish disciples were animated, that, judging from the Greek names they bore, all the seven who were thus chosen belonged to the Hellenist section, from which the murmuring had originally come. Only two of them, however, seem to have risen into prominence in the Church in any other capacity than that of deacon. These were Philip, who is elsewhere styled the *Evangelist*,* and Stephen, who received the protomartyr's crown. The expressions used by the historian concerning the latter are very strong. He is described as "full of faith and power;" and it is affirmed that those who disputed with him were "not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." "He seems," as Dean Stanley has well said, "to have been an instance, such as is not uncommon in history, of a new energy derived from a new sphere. He shot far ahead of his six companions, and far above his particular office."† Not content with serving tables, he sought to interest those among whom he moved in Jesus and his Gospel. Especially did he aim at the conversion of his fellow-Hellenists; and the earnestness of his efforts in this direction evoked the antagonism of the members of four particular synagogues whose names are here mentioned, and to one of which—that, namely, of the Cilicians—it is likely that Saul of Tarsus belonged. It is entirely probable, therefore, that as Paul was in the front rank of his persecutors, he was also one of the keenest disputants with whom Stephen had to contend; and though the immediate effect was only to inflame the rage of the controversialist, we may well believe that the truths which he then heard became the germs of much which, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, afterward developed into the Epistles with which we are now so familiar.

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* Acts xxi., 8. † Smith's "Dictionary," art. STEPHEN.

We are not told what were the particular points concerning which Stephen debated with his opponents; but as he was charged with speaking "blasphemous words against Moses and against God," and the witnesses against him alleged that they had heard him say that "this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs that Moses delivered to us," we infer that he must have been insisting on the spirituality of true worship, the temporary nature of the Jewish law, and the non-essential relation of locality to the service of God. It is, indeed, affirmed that those who bore this testimony were false witnesses. But the falsehood most probably consisted in the meaning which they imputed to his words, just as in the analogous case of the Lord Jesus, his own expressions, which were correctly quoted, were perverted into the utterances of blasphemy. We incline, therefore, to the opinion that Stephen actually had said all that the witnesses alleged, the rather that, as Lewin has well remarked, "this was no more than what our Lord himself had foretold to the woman of Samaria, that neither in Samaria nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth, should God be worshipped."* Perhaps his birth, training, and residence abroad had prepared him for a freer handling of the Mosaic law than that which it was accustomed to receive in the metropolis of Judea; and so the Holy Ghost, working through his own individual leanings, may have brought him all the more rapidly to appreciate the importance of that aspect of Christianity which distinguishes it from all mere localized worship, and fits it for diffusion throughout the world. This would lead him, in his disputations with the Hellenists, to dwell on the spiritual character of the Gospel;

* The "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," by Thomas Lewin, Esq., vol. i., p. 32.

to insist upon its superiority to the external and restricted ritual of Moses; and to forecast the time when Judaism should cease, and Jew and Gentile should stand alike before God, without respect to race or to locality.

If we take this view, we may easily comprehend how the prejudices, not only of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but also of the common people of Jerusalem, were raised so speedily and so vindictively against him. At a later day, when Paul himself was making his defence from the castle stairs in the same city, the people gave him audience until he spake of his having been commissioned to go to the Gentiles; but at that point they became infuriated, and cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."* Now, a somewhat similar effect was produced by Stephen's addresses, and therefore we may suppose that he had been wounding Jewish susceptibilities by pursuing a course of argument which clearly led to the inbringing of the Gentiles.

But his adversaries would not proceed against him without some show of law. Accordingly, they caught him and brought him to the council-hall, in which the members of the Sanhedrim, with the high-priest as their president, were assembled, and there preferred against him the accusation to which we have referred. The tumult was doubtless great as the crowd surged into the court-room, for noise is an inseparable accompaniment of Oriental rage; but all was calmness in the confessor's breast; for, as they gazed upon him, men saw "his face as it had been the face of an angel." The perception of this heavenly radiance surprised them into silence; for when, in answer to the high-priest's question, "Are these things so?" he entered upon his defence, they listened for a time with close attention.

* Acts xxii., 22.

The address which he delivered seems to the superficial reader to be no more than a brief *résumé* of leading incidents in the history of Israel, ending with a withering denunciation of his accusers. It appears, at first sight, to give no sort of answer to the charges which had been brought against him, and to have little or no bearing on the circumstances in which he was placed. But these hastily-received impressions are erroneous; for, when we go minutely into the analysis of his defence, we discover that Stephen was making history do the work of argument, and that his speech was as skilfully constructed as it was conclusive. I say nothing now of the minor and unimportant discrepancies between some of his statements and those of the Book of Genesis;* but, believing as I do, that even though they were utterly irreconcilable, there is nothing in them to shake our faith in the great verities of the Word of God, I proceed at once to set before you the drift and purpose of the address as a whole. There are in it three distinct yet parallel lines of argument, along which the mind of the speaker runs, as it were, simultaneously, until, with the accumulated impetus which he has thence derived, he hurls at the heads of his hearers that tremendous invective in the midst of which he was interrupted by the lawless violence alike of judges, accusers, and spectators.

The first of these lines of argument treats of locality in its relation to the acceptable worship of God. His accusers had alleged that he had spoken against "this holy place;" and he met their statement with a simple rehearsal of facts in the history of their own ancestors, which suggested the conclusion that, as there had been true worship of God be-

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* For a clear statement of these discrepancies, and the best attempt at the solution of them, see the Donellan Lectures on "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture," by William Lee, pp. 448–454.

fore the Temple was built, so there might be again after it had passed away. Very evidently there was no difference between one place and another in the matter of holiness, when Abraham lived on the earth; for that patriarch served God as really and as acceptably as any man ever did, and yet he had no possession save a burial-place in the Land of Promise. It mattered not, however, where he reared his altar, his offering was well pleasing unto God, and wherever he called upon the name of the Lord, his prayer was heard and answered. So, in Egypt, the service rendered to God by Joseph was as truly worship as if it had been offered in the so-called "holy place;" while, when Moses stood at the burning bush trembling with mingled fear and reverence, Jehovah said to him, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground;" implying that sacredness was given to any locality by God's gracious revelation of his presence there. Moreover, after the tabernacle was set up, it was moved from place to place in the wilderness, and even after the settlement of the tribes in Canaan it was found at Shiloh,* at Gibeon,† and apparently also at Nob.‡ Nor is this all; at the very dedication of the Temple itself, Solomon recognized the fact that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands;" and at a later day Isaiah had reaffirmed the same thing, saying: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord."§ Now, from all this, the inference, implied rather than expressed, but yet likely to be well understood by those with whom Stephen had been in

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* Joshua xviii., 1.

† 1 Chron. xvi., 39.

‡ 1 Sam. xxi., 1.

§ Isa. lxvi., 1, 2.

the habit of debating, was, that locality was not of the essence of worship, and that he was not to be found guilty of blasphemy for what he had said regarding the Temple.

The second line of argument dealt with the question of the permanence of the Mosaic ritual. He had been accused of "blaspheming Moses," and his reply to that indictment was a rehearsal of their history which showed that from its beginning there had been a gradual development in their religious progress, one thing having been added to, or having grown out of another, and all reaching forward to something yet nobler in the future for which they were preparing. First there was the call of Abraham, and his separation from his Chaldean kinsmen; then, added to that separation, there was the covenant of circumcision; then, after the sojourn in Egypt, there was superimposed the ritual of the tabernacle, which, at a later date, was superseded by that of the Temple. But at the introduction of each of these changes there had been an indication given that something still nobler was to be expected. Thus at Abraham's call the promise, made to him while yet he was in Ur of the Chaldees, was one which embraced not a household or a nation merely, but the world; for so it ran: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This promise was renewed when the covenant of circumcision was given; and when Moses introduced the law he pointed forward to another prophet "like unto himself," who was to arise, and exhorted that when he came he should be heard. "Like unto himself:" mark the words, for they describe not simply resemblance in character, but rather and chiefly resemblance in prophetical position, so that, as Moses differed from all other servants of God in being the introducer of a new economy, this coming one to whom he pointed, and for whom he bespoke attention, would also be the inaugurator of a new dispensation. The quotation of this predic-

tion effectually disposed of the accusation that he had blasphemed Moses; for it showed that he was in truth rendering the fullest obedience to the great law-giver in listening to the prophet whereof he had spoken, while they were stubbornly resisting his authority in refusing to accept the spiritual system of the Messiah.

The third line of argument deals with the consciences of his hearers, and was designed to show them that, in their rejection of Jesus and his salvation, they were only following in the footsteps of their fathers. It had been, alas! a characteristic of their people almost from the beginning that they had despised, resisted, and, when they could, even murdered those whom God had chosen and appointed to be their leaders, instructors, or benefactors. The sons of Jacob, filled with envy at the prophetic intimation of Joseph's exaltation over them, sold him into slavery, and yet they lived to be beholden to him for their preservation from famine. The Israelites in Egypt would not receive Moses when in the prime and vigor of his manhood he offered to be their champion against Pharaoh's oppression; and even when, forty years afterward, he came to lead them from their house of bondage, they distressed him with their murmurings and disobedience, "thrusting him from them, and turning back again to Egypt in their hearts." Even at the base of Sinai they worshipped a golden calf, and, in the course of their wanderings, they followed after other forms of idollatry, so that it might be said that they had always resisted the Holy Ghost. One cannot read the portion of the address which refers to Moses without feeling that throughout it the speaker is running in his own mind a parallel between the treatment which the great emancipator had received at the hands of his people, and that which the very men then hearing him had given to the Lord Jesus. He held the mirror up so faithfully before them that they could

not fail to see themselves in the sketch which he had given of their fathers. And now the emotion which he had so long repressed burst out all the more vehemently because it had been so persistently held back; and clause after clause of his terrible invective was sent out as with the force of an old Roman catapult, and fell with terrible effect upon their ears. Hear how it rolls its climactic thunder out, his shining face the while supplying the lightning's gleam. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

Thus he, who stood at the bar of the council, arraigned his judges and accusers alike at the bar of God; and, knowing the character of those whom he addressed, we do not wonder at the effect which his words produced. Throughout his defence he had been steadily, one might almost say, stealthily approaching the sore spot in their consciences, and the moment he touched that with the smarting acid of his searching speech, they rose in a rage and "gnashed upon him with their teeth." There was an end now to all pretence of judicial soberness; they hurried and hustled their victim out of the council-hall, and took him away to the common place of execution, that they might stone him to death.* But their violence had no terror for him; for in

* The fact that they thus assumed a right to inflict capital punishment, which it is elsewhere said the Romans had taken away from them, will be no difficulty to those who recognize that this was a lawless proceeding, the end of which was precipitated by the outburst of the fury of a mob. If, however, as Lewin (vol. i., p. 33) has supposed, the martyrdom of Stephen occurred in the interval between the recall of Pilate and

the hour of his deepest extremity special support was given to him, and he was calm in the consciousness of his Saviour's presence: "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Upon this, his persecutors, resembling therein the intolerant in a later generation, drowned his voice with the noise which they made, and went on with their deadly work. The witnesses, laying aside their upper garments, and committing them to the care of Saul of Tarsus, who seems to have been prominent in the outrage, cast the first stones. These brought the noble martyr to his knees, but no words of blame or of malediction escaped his lips. Still was there before his eyes that bright vision of Christ's loving interest in his servant's welfare, and so,

> "He heeded not reviling tones,
> Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
> Tho' cursed and scorned, and bruised with stones:
> But looking upward, full of grace,
> He prayed, and from a happy place
> God's glory smote him on the face."*

He prayed, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" but that nothing might be wanting to complete his likeness to his Lord, he hastened to add, "Lay not this sin to their charge;" and then, despite the storm of human passion that was howling round him, he "fell asleep."

Thus, in the fiery chariot of martyrdom, this earliest sufferer of death for Jesus' sake went up to wear the crown

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the appointment of his successor, while yet there was no procurator in the province, that may explain why it was that they took it upon themselves to put Stephen to death.

* Tennyson's "Two Voices."

foreshadowed in the name he bore,* while sorrowing disciples gathered up his battered and blood-stained remains and carried them to the grave, there to await the morning of the resurrection. But an earlier resurrection was in store for the principles which he taught; for though he knew not of it at the moment, the mantle of the martyred deacon fell upon the shoulders of the man of Tarsus, even as he stood there guarding the raiment of the witnesses. The words which he had that day heard were the seeds out of which his whole doctrine grew, and even till his latest days there are indications in his letters that many of the expressions which Stephen had used were indelibly engraven on Paul's heart. Stephen's quotation of Isaiah's words, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," was evidently very fresh in Paul's memory when he spoke to the men of Athens from Mars' hill.† The phrase "uncircumcised in heart" reappears, with such expansion as frequent meditation on it would produce, in the letter to the Romans,‡ and the final petition of the martyr for his murderers is almost the last recorded ejaculation of Paul: "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."§

How the Pharisaic zealot became the Christian apostle, and so was enabled to understand and appropriate the utterances of Stephen, will appear as we proceed; meanwhile, let us pause here for a season to gather up and carry with us the lessons which this early chapter of Christian Church history suggests.

Let us learn, in the first place, that fidelity to truth provokes antagonism; holiness and sin are mutually repellant; love and selfishness are the opposites of each other, and sooner or later the followers of the one will come into

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* *Στέφανος*, a crown.

† Acts xvii., 24.

‡ Rom. ii., 29.

§ 2 Tim. iv., 16.

collision with the votaries of the other. Our Lord Jesus, who was the incarnation of love, was crucified by those who could not bear the rebuke of his matchless benevolence; and in the proportion in which we manifest his spirit we shall provoke the enmity with which he was assailed. Thus it was with Stephen in the instance before us. He was so like Christ in the meekness with which he was adorned; in the far-reaching spirituality of the principles which he taught, and in the world-embracing charity which he manifested, that they who had nailed the Lord to the cross were impelled by similar malignity to stone him to death. In these days, however, the world has changed the character of its persecution. No longer, among us, at least, are men sent to the dungeon or the scaffold for their religious faith, and for so much let us be devoutly thankful. But let us not suppose that the opposition of the selfish and sinful to the Gospel of Christ has ceased. On the contrary, it is manifested in many bitter and insulting forms. We are not required now to bear our testimony before councils and rulers, or to show our attachment to Jesus by burning for him at the stake; but we have to stand up for him in our homes, and in our workshops, and in our counting-rooms; in the life of business and of politics, and in the intercourse which we cannot but carry on with the ungodly. Nor let any one suppose that this is easy. It entails tribulation and antagonism of a very real sort. It provokes ridicule and scorn. It makes us the butt of many a bitter jest, and the object of many a withering sarcasm. These things are as painful to the spirit to-day, as the stones were to the martyr's body in the olden time. Yet, let us not complain or think that any strange thing has happened to us, when we are thus assailed. The opposition of the ungodly is one of the seals to the genuineness of our discipleship, and if we bear ourselves rightly under it, who can tell but that it may be the

occasion of blessing to multitudes? Let us, therefore, take it patiently in memory of him who said, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you," and who himself "when he was reviled reviled not again." The banner which hangs in idle folds round the flag-staff in the sultry stillness of the summer noon, is fully unfurled by the wild rudeness of the wintry wind; and men may see in the latter case the emblem and inscription which were invisible in the former. Even so the antagonism of our spiritual adversaries is valuable, in that it brings forth to view those traits of Christian character and points of Christian doctrine which otherwise would have been unobserved. It will do this, however, only when we keep faithful to our Lord, and determine never to be ashamed either of him or of his cross. Let us, therefore, animated by the example of this faithful martyr, be "steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lor[illegible] rasmuch as we know that our labor shall not be in vain [illegible] the Lord."

Let us mark, in the second place, the deep interest which the glorified Redeemer has in his suffering followers. The Lord sendeth no man a warfare on his own charges; and when he has special work for any one to do, he gives him special grace to enable him to do it. It was, therefore, in perfect keeping with his faithful tenderness that he appeared to Stephen at the moment of his beginning his defence, and then as he was in the article of dying. He keeps his richest cordials for our sorest need; and in the hour of our deepest extremity he is ready with his greatest help. One thing here all commentators on the Scriptures, from Chrysostom downward, have specially remarked. In all other portions of the Word of God the ascended Redeemer is represented as "sitting" on the right hand of God. That is the posture of dignity and authority. But Stephen says, "I see the Son of man *standing* at the right hand of God"—as if

to indicate his eager interest in his persecuted servant, and his readiness to welcome him to his reward. When "the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," his tranquillity is not disturbed by the wild uproar. "He who sitteth in the heavens" only "laughs" at that. But when a saint is suffering for his glory, he is moved indeed, and appears to him as one "standing" to receive him. He cannot sit in such an emergency, for he is himself persecuted in his dying disciple, and must go to soothe and sustain him. What sight could be more transporting than that which thus met the gaze of Stephen! and it was little wonder that he thought nothing of the manner of his dying, as he was thus permitted to anticipate the consequences of his death.

But Jesus is one with all his people as really as he was with Stephen. "In all their afflictions he is afflicted." Whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. Believer, is not this to thee at once a succor and a consolation in thy time of trial? There needs now no miraculous opening of the heavens, no special vision of the glorified Son of man, to teach thee this blessed truth; it is here revealed most plainly in the open Book. Thy foes can strike thee only through thy Saviour's heart. He is thy shield and buckler, thy high tower and thy deliverer; and if die thou must, thy death is a departure to be with him.

Let us mark, in the third place, the peacefulness of the believer's death. I question if there be anywhere in Scripture a more suggestive contrast than that which is presented in this narrative between the noisy rage of the persecuting company, and the quiet tranquillity described in these words, "When he had said this, he fell asleep." What a beautiful description of dying! "He fell asleep!" As you repeat the phrase you think of some home scene, when, in the bosom of his family, surrounded by comforts, and soothed with every possible ministration of affection, some loved one

passes away; but it seems out of keeping here, considering the violence of which Stephen was the victim. It seems so, but it is not really so, for it tells of the peace that was in the martyr's heart. You cannot go to sleep with anxiety fretting your spirit; but when your mind is calm and undisturbed, then the night angel comes to you with her gift of forgetfulness and her ministry of restoration. So when we read that Stephen "fell asleep" we see through the words into the deep, unbroken quiet of his soul.

But this is not all; for such a mode of speech suggests a future awakening. In few things has the influence of Christianity been seen more than in the transformation which it has wrought on the views and feelings of men in reference to death. The ancient Romans regarded it with dark and hopeless dread; and as they put the ashes in the urn, the mourners cried, "Farewell! farewell! eternally farewell!" But now we Christians look forward to the resurrection with faith and hope and joy, and call the graveyard appropriately the cemetery, that is, the sleeping-place. More than a quarter of a century ago, while I was a teacher in a Scottish village, it was my custom at even-tide to wander down by a river's side until I came to an ancient church-yard. There I found a moss-covered stone, with its inscription all illegible, until, like another Old Mortality, I had renewed each letter with a nail, when I read these lines—doggerel enough, but higher in their flight of faith than the loftiest poetic inspiration of Greece or Rome did ever reach:

"I go to grave as to my bed,
Yet not there to remain;
Awhile for to repose therein,
And then to rise again."

Immediately opposite that stone there were the roofless remains of an old church, part of which had been enclosed to

make the burial vault of the family of the Marquis of Hastings; and over the door of that ancestral place of sepulture was the Hastings coat of arms, with the motto, "I bide my time!" So I learned to put the two together, and made out of them the words of Job: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," *i. e.*, my set time in the grave will I wait, "till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands."* The day is coming when the earth shall give up its dead. The last enemy is already conquered by the risen Christ; and when "the mystery of God" on earth is finished, then the formal triumph shall be celebrated, and the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible, and shall be glorified.

> "'Tis but a night, a long and moonless night,
> We make the grave our bed, and then are gone.
> Thus at the shut of eve the weary bird
> Leaves the wide air, and in some lonely brake
> Cowers down, and dozes till the dawn of day,
> Then claps his well-fledged wings and bears away."

Finally, we may learn that words which seem to have been in vain are not always fruitless. Stephen's defence was unsuccessful so far, at least, as securing the preservation of his own life was concerned. But his argument was not lost; for when not long afterward the zealous Saul was converted on the way to Damascus, this remarkable address, as I have no doubt, came back upon him, and became the means which, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, were used for his enlightenment in the significance of the Gospel of Christ. Augustine has said that if Stephen had not prayed, Saul would not have been converted; and we may perhaps conclude that if the protomartyr had not taken the peculiar line of defence which he adopted, Saul might not have be-

* Job xiv., 14, 15.

come the apostle of the Gentiles. As we shall see hereafter, Paul, from his Pharisaic training, might have been predisposed, on becoming a Christian, to join the party of the circumcision; but this speech of Stephen before the council seems to have been at least one of the means which God employed for leading him to the broad spiritual view of the Gospel which he really adopted; and, as we have already pointed out, the careful student will find not only similarity in many of Paul's expressions in his epistles to some of those used by Stephen, but also a very considerable resemblance between the arguments which he employed with the Judaizers, and those which the protomartyr used with the council. Thus seeds which appear to fall by the wayside are not always devoured by the fowls of the air. Thoughts once uttered are never entirely without result. The persecutors could kill Stephen, but they could not recall or arrest the progress of the words which he had spoken; they might as well have tried to stop an arrow in its flight, or to bind the fleet coursers of the wind. The moment they were uttered they were beyond all human control; and they produced results after he who had spoken them had passed from earth. The seed grows, though the sower dies and may not reap the crop. So Stephen's address fell into Paul's heart, and though it lay there dormant for a season, yet when the life-giving Spirit watered it with his heavenly influences, it sprung up and brought forth fruit in the life and writings of the great apostle. What a comfort that is to the man who fears that his words for God are fruitless and forgotten! Nay, a word is always a seed; and that which we have spoken in the ear may by-and-by be proclaimed by some one mightier than we from the house-top.

But what a lesson, too, for the persecutor! How vain his efforts! Even when he seems to have succeeded, he is real-

ly vanquished; for, though the man is murdered, the truth which he spake cannot be killed. Here is the real Phœnix; for when its enemies have thought that they have burned it in burning its preacher, it has risen from the flames with new strength of wing to take a wider and a loftier flight. Thus God maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and, by his infinite wisdom, bringeth good out of evil.

II.

EARLY HISTORY AND CONVERSION OF PAUL.

Acts ix., 1–22.

TARSUS, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, was situated on the river Cydnus, about twelve miles from the sea, and on the plain which lies between the snowy mountain range of Taurus and the Mediterranean. It spread out on both banks of the river, which, though now choked with mud and sand, was then widened into a harbor and lined with spacious docks. From its communication with the Levant, and its proximity to the passes over the mountains into the interior, both on the north and east,* it was a place of great commercial and military importance. It was made a free city by Mark Anthony; and this privilege was confirmed by Augustus, probably as a reward for some service which had been rendered to him by the inhabitants. This entitled its citizens to be governed by their own laws, and to be protected by their own soldiers, but it did not carry with it the dignity of Roman citizenship; and it was not until long after the days of Paul, when Tarsus was made a Roman colony, that imperial citizenship became the birthright of its natives.

The prevailing influence in it at the time of which we are to speak was Greek; and from its schools of literature and philosophy, which rivalled, and in the opinion of some even

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* The pass on the north was called the Cilician Gates; that on the south, the Syrian Gates.

surpassed, those of Athens and Alexandria, many men had gone to places of trust and honor throughout the Empire.* But though the great majority of the population was of Greek extraction, there was a large number of Jewish residents, who had originally settled in the city for purposes of trade, and who maintained all their religious exclusiveness by conforming in every respect to the Mosaic law. In the home of such a Jewish family, in this Gentile city, somewhere about the beginning of the Christian era—certainly not later than its first decade—Saul, who was also called Paul, was born. His parents belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, and were "Hebrews of the Hebrews,"† that is to say, Jews who had not been contaminated by any intermarriages with Gentiles in the line of their ancestry. They were also Pharisees of the strictest sort, and therefore we may conclude that in all social, educational, and religious things they kept themselves aloof from the general movements of the city. They named their son Saul, either after the first King of Israel, who was the great man of their tribe, or because he had been given to them in answer to prayer, for Saul, like Samuel, means "asked." We know not how many other children grew up within their dwelling; but there was at least one daughter, whose son, in after-days, was instrumental in saving the life of Paul,‡ and we are therefore at liberty to picture to ourselves the boy and girl growing up with and into each other, sharing each other's sports and labors, and helping each other by that unconscious training of mutual influence which is always more formative than mere abecedarian instruction. We catch no momentary glimpse of the apostle's mother, and therefore we cannot

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* See Lewin, vol. i., p. 7; Howson, vol. i., pp. 42, 115; Plumptre, "St. Paul in Asia Minor," pp. 17, 18.

† Phil. iii., 5; Acts xxiii., 6.

‡ Acts xxiii., 16.

speak definitely as to her character, or trace any of his peculiar traits to her home life and example; but, Pharisees as they were, we may conclude that his parents made him early familiar with those delightful Scriptural stories which have always been so attractive to the young, and which are not more remarkable for their fascinating interest than for their educational power.

His father, as it would seem, was a Roman citizen,* though how he obtained that distinction there is no evidence to show. But the possession of it must have been always a source of satisfaction to the members of his household. In the years of his boyhood, the principal associates of Paul would be young Jews like himself; but he could not grow up in a Grecian city without acquiring the language spoken by its inhabitants, and receiving some impression from the men and things around him; and in these respects, also, he was unconsciously, yet really, being prepared for the great work of his later life. After a time, probably when he was about thirteen years of age, he was sent to Jerusalem to prosecute his studies there. His instructor was Gamaliel,† who gave such cautious advice to the Sanhedrim when the apostles were under accusation before it,‡ and who is supposed by some to have been the son of the venerable Simeon, who received the infant Saviour in his arms.§ His eminence was such that he was one of the seven teachers who received the title "Rabban;" and, though a Pharisee, he was distinguished for breadth of culture and soundness of judgment. The style of training to which youths under the superintendence of such teachers as he were subjected, may be understood and appreciated from the following description, which may in all points be verified by references

* Acts xx., 28.
† Acts xxii., 3.
‡ Acts v., 34–40.
§ Luke ii., 25.

to trustworthy authorities.* The class was not unlike a debating society, with the professor as chairman and referee. A passage of Holy Scripture was chosen, or a general subject for discussion proposed. One student opened with an exposition or dissertation which was opposed by some, and defended by others. The most contradictory opinions were allowed to be freely expressed and fully argued; and so the intellectual powers were sharpened, while all sides of a subject were brought into prominence. This system tended to make the young men familiar with the Old Testament; taught them to be quick in anticipating objections, and acute in replying to them; and gave them a readiness of utterance and a rapidity of mental movement which could scarcely have been so well developed otherwise. How much it influenced the style of Paul's reasoning will be apparent to every one who marks the close-packed argumentation, the pointed interrogations, the ready answers to anticipated criticisms, and the *perfervid* energy for which his writings are remarkable. Of Paul's fellow-students we know little or nothing. There is a tradition that Barnabas was one of them; and he must have come more or less familiarly into contact with Jesus and Simon, the sons of Gamaliel, the former of whom was afterward high-priest, and both of whom were probably in the council many years later, when he was arraigned before it.

But among the Jews the learning of a trade was a part of education. One of their rabbis has said, "He that teacheth not his son a trade doth the same as if he had taught him to steal;" and another has asked, "He that hath a trade in his hand, to what is he like? He is like a vineyard that is fenced."† So, after finishing what we may call his colle-

* See Lewin, vol. i., pp. 10, 11; Conybeare and Howson, vol. i., pp. 63, 64; Kitto's "Cyclopædia," art. EDUCATION.

† See Lewin as before, vol. i., p. 8.

giate course at Jerusalem, Paul seems to have returned to Tarsus, where he learned the special trade of the city, which, in a subsequent chapter of the Acts, is called tent-making.* It involved in it working with two sorts of materials—one a species of cloth obtained by spinning and weaving the long hair of the goats of that province, and thence called cilicium; and the other the skins of animals. This accounts for the fact that Chrysostom calls Paul at one time "a tent-stitcher,"† and at another a "leather-cutter."‡ Sometimes, in those days of toil, he might grumble a little over the hardships which he had to endure; but, though he knew it not at the moment, he was "laying up in store against the time to come;" and just as the missionary Moffat, in the course of his labors in Caffreland, many a time blessed the memory of his grandmother, because in spite of his reluctance she insisted, while he was a boy, on his learning to do a great number of out-of-the-way things, saying, "You do not know what you may need in after-life;" so, when in Ephesus and Corinth Paul's hands ministered to his necessities, he would have a glow of honest satisfaction in the reflection that he had persevered so thoroughly as to master the trade to which he had thus early been apprenticed.

From Tarsus he returned, apparently while yet a youth, to Jerusalem; and it is an interesting question whether he ever came in these days into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are no data in existence from which we can give a reliable answer to such an inquiry. Some, indeed, have interpreted his words, "We have known Christ after the flesh,"§ as implying that he had actually seen and conversed with him upon the earth in the days of his personal ministry; and others, with perhaps greater probability, un

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* Acts xvii., 3.

† *Σκηνοράφος.*

‡ *Σκυτοτόμος.* See Lewin, vol. i., p. 9.

§ 2 Cor. v., 16.

derstand them to refer to his former carnal ideas of the person and mission of the Messiah. But, however that may have been, his Pharisaic training would naturally prejudice him against some of the doctrines which Christ preached; and considering the impetuous ardor of his temperament, we do not wonder at finding him among the fiercest antagonists of the Gospel. His persecuting zeal, indeed, seems strangely inconsistent with the wise advice given by Gamaliel some time before; but we must not forget that when the great rabbi counselled a policy of non-committal waiting, the apostles had not yet begun to speak of the abrogation of the Mosaic law, or of the placing of the Gentiles on a footing of equality with the Jews. So soon, however, as Stephen commenced to hold his disputations with the Hellenists, and to ventilate these doctrines, supporting his assertions with the statements of the Old Testament itself, even the cautious and, for a Pharisee, catholic-spirited Gamaliel* was roused into animosity, and the fanaticism of his pupils flamed up into intolerance. Naturally, in such a conflict as Stephen's words precipitated, Saul came into prominence. His acuteness of intellect and intensity of character would inevitably put him in the front. When, in his letter to the Galatians, he says, "I profited above many of my contemporaries in the Jews' religion,"† we understand him as implying that he was a leader among his companions; and we can easily believe that even then visions of literary and political eminence were floating before his imagination. Some have alleged, and with great show of probability on their side, that he was thus early a member of the Sanhedrim;‡ but whether or not we adopt that opinion, we are convinced

* Witness the prayer against Christian heretics which was composed or sanctioned by him. It is quoted by Howson, vol. i., p. 62, note.

† Gal. i., 14.

‡ See Farrar's "Life and Work of St. Paul," vol. i., p. 169.

that he was already regarded as a rising man, who was destined to be one of the foremost leaders of his age.

He must have been about thirty-five years of age when the persecution arose about Stephen. In the murder of the protomartyr he was painfully prominent; and in the cruel treatment of the disciples of Christ, which drove so many of them from the Holy City, he took an earnest, we might say even a ferocious, part—dragging men and women to prison, and manifesting such fury that he is described by the sacred historian, in language appropriate to some savage monster, "as breathing out threatenings and slaughter." Pressensé, in his admirable work on the "Early Years of Christianity,"* has attempted to account for this by supposing that the arguments of Stephen had already produced a deep impression on his mind, and that he flung himself with all his soul into the work of the persecutor simply that he might drown the doubts which had begun to trouble him. His morbid excitement was thus, in the opinion of that writer, an evidence of his inner restlessness. It is an ingenious theory, and, if accepted, it would help to take away somewhat from what we commonly regard as the suddenness of the apostle's conversion. But, though there have been some instances in which the severity of one's assault on a system has been only "the utterance of old convictions that thus vainly hope to stay awhile the consciously felt current of conversion" to it;† yet there is no sufficient evidence that this was the case with Paul. Such an opinion does not seem to be confirmed by the references made by him to the

* P. 105.

† Notably was this so in the strong language against Rome used by John Henry Newman in his work on "The Prophetical Office of the Church," the publication of which preceded by but a brief interval his secession to the Papal Church. See his own Apologia, and *Princeton Review*, Sept., 1878, p. 625.

subject in his later life, but rather to be inconsistent with them all; for instead of hinting at any beginning of misgiving, he declares in the most unqualified manner that through all his career as a persecutor "he verily thought that he was doing God service." We believe, therefore, that he was, up to the moment of his conversion, a sincere and unquestioning adherent of the Jewish religion, as interpreted by the Pharisees; and that he engaged in persecution not to keep himself from brooding in doubt over what Stephen had said, but because he had the strongest conviction that it was a sacred duty to put to death the disciples of Jesus.* He went so far in this direction as to offer his services to the high-priest, and even to suggest that he might be sent to Damascus to bring back with him from that city to Jerusalem, as prisoners, any whom he might there find infected with what he accounted to be the dangerous heresy of faith in the Nazarene.

It may seem strange that, under a government so jealous as that of the Roman Empire was, the Sanhedrim should have had jurisdiction over those who lived at such a distance as Damascus; but by the decree of Julius Cæsar, confirmed at a subsequent date by Augustus, the Jews were permitted everywhere to live under their own laws. Besides, at this particular time, the state of affairs in the Eastern provinces was such that apprehensions like those which Saul proposed to make would attract little or no attention, so long as the rights of Roman citizens were respected. Nor must we forget that the authority of their high-priest was recognized by Jews everywhere, much in the same way as the supremacy of the Pope is acknowledged, in our own day, by Roman Catholic churches in all lands.

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* This is the view which first presents itself to a reader of the narrative, and it has been adopted by both Meyer and Baumgarten.

Damascus is about one hundred and forty miles from Jerusalem. It is the oldest city in the world, and was, at the date of which we speak, the capital of Syria. It lies in the plain at the eastern base of the Antilibanus, and is watered by the rivers Pharpar and Abana. It is pre-eminently the jewel of the East; and the view as the traveller approaches it has been thus described: "The great city lies before him; and the outlines of several of its edifices can be dimly traced beyond the thick foliage; behind him towers the majestic dome of Hermon with its furrows of snow, making it resemble the head of an old man; upon his right are the Hauran, the two little parallel chains which enclose the lower course of the Pharpar, and the tumuli of the region of the lakes; and upon his left are the outer spurs of the Antilibanus, stretching out to join Mount Hermon."* For this city, armed with the credentials which he had sought, Paul and his companions set out on their persecuting errand. Six days they had been journeying, and now the sun was approaching his meridian height, as they neared their destination. "The hush of Oriental noon" was over the scene; when "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." His companions were speechless with amazement. They saw the light, but did not discern any individual figure; they heard the voice of one speaking, but could not distinguish the words that were

* Renan, "The Apostles," p. 170, Carleton's Translation.

spoken ;* and when, after all was over, they discovered that he was blind, they led him by the hand into the city.

Why ? thou, me ? What ? thou, me ? It was all involved in these two questions. The Lord appeared to Saul. He was seen by him there as a living and reigning one, having a right to lordship over him, and making a personal appeal to him. For the moment there might have been no others in the universe than these two ; and the matter to be settled between them was whether the sinner would accept the Saviour as his sovereign, or would reject him as an usurper. Paul was "apprehended of Christ Jesus ;" would he "apprehend that for which he was apprehended ?" That was the matter he had now to settle. It was a crisis, short, sharp, almost volcanic in its intensity, but yet thoroughly decisive ; for he came out of it yielding himself unreservedly to Jesus as he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?"

But the same is true of every conversion. When Christ deals with a soul, he "takes it aside from the multitude." He puts it face to face with himself. He compels it to con-

* So we find the principle of harmony between the account given by the historian in chap. ix. and those given by Paul in his speeches at Jerusalem and before Agrippa, chaps. xxii. and xxvi. Baumgarten (vol. i., p. 210) has found the true explanation, when he says that "we have here an instance of a difference of sensibility in the different witnesses, with regard to the visibility of a heavenly phenomenon," and cites as parallel cases the account of the vision given to Daniel by the side of the river Hiddekel, and described Dan. x., 7 ; and the different explanations given by different individuals of the celestial voice that spoke to Jesus, John xii., 28, 29. The other discrepancy, which arises from the fact that in one account it is affirmed that Paul's companions *stood* speechless, and in another that they "were all fallen to the earth," will occasion no perplexity to him who remembers that all the three accounts are furnished in *one* history by the same author, who was evidently unconscious of any inconsistency between them ; or who pauses to think that the falling and the standing may easily refer to different moments of the same wondrous experience.

front the question, Why art thou opposed to me? The gate into the kingdom is thus like one of those turnstile wickets through which each must pass alone, and at which each must be reckoned with for himself, and not for another. Each must there declare that he takes Jesus for his Lord, and is determined to hold himself exclusively for his service; otherwise he cannot enter; but when he has sincerely expressed that resolution, the very fact that he has done so, is an evidence of the reality of his regeneration.

Behold the blind man led by the hand into the city! How different this entrance from that which a short time before he had anticipated! Then he thought of being received with honor by the rulers of the synagogues, and greeted by his countrymen as the champion of their faith. Now his mind is turned in another direction, and the ambition of his life is revolutionized. He who came to make others prisoners, is himself taken captive by the Lord. He who came to drag others with the cords of persecution, is himself drawn by the power of the Redeemer's love. He whose eyes aforetime were fixed and fascinated by earthly objects, is now blind to all worldly glories; but there shines within him that "celestial light" by which he is enabled "to see and tell of things invisible to mortal sight." Those three days of darkness! Who may attempt to speak of the revelations which they made to him? Now would come back upon him with new meaning the words which had fallen from Stephen in their eager discussions; now, too, he would understand that seraphic light that played upon the martyr's face as he stood before the council, and that ecstatic utterance which fell from him as they were leading him out to death. And as the guilt of his own course stood out before him in terrible distinctness, how gladly would he recall the sufferer's prayer, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge," and find in his conversion the answer to its entreaty!

At the close of these never-to-be-forgotten days, a Christian named Ananias, who had been supernaturally prepared for the discharge of the duty, was the means of restoring to him his sight, and imparting to him the gift of the Holy Ghost. With characteristic decision he obeyed the command to be baptized, and after a short time he came forth and publicly in the synagogues of the city preached the faith which he once sought to destroy.

This interesting narrative may be viewed as the record both of a personal experience and of a public event. In the former light it is valuable as illustrating the means by which conversion is produced; in the latter it is important as furnishing strong corroborative evidence of the divine origin of the Gospel. It may seem, indeed, that the extraordinary nature of the incidents connected with it removes this conversion from the category of common occurrences, and makes it unavailable as a directory for others; but though there was miracle here, the miracle was not in the conversion properly so called, but only in its accessories and antecedents. In a certain sense, every conversion is the result of supernatural agency; but when we look into this history attentively, we discover that the change in Saul's heart and life was produced by the very same means which accomplish such spiritual transformations among ourselves. From the divine side it was produced by the power of the Holy Ghost; from the human it was the result of Paul's own apprehension and acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus. Paul saw and believed that Jesus is alive, and that sight and faith revolutionized his life. Up till this time he had regarded Jesus of Nazareth as an ordinary man who was dead; but now he saw that he who had died upon the cross is the Lord of Glory, living and reigning on the heavenly throne. No doubt he was convinced of this by the miraculous appearance of Christ; but it was the being con

vinced of it that converted him. Like every other Christian, he entered the kingdom through the belief of the truth. The manner in which he was led to that belief was peculiar; but the effects of it were the same as they are in every convert, for it issued in unreserved transference of himself to the service of Christ; in earnest prayer; in prompt confession, and in the public bearing of his testimony in the synagogues of the city.

One thing, however, is conspicuous by its absence, as indeed it is in all the conversions of which we have a detailed account in the New Testament. Here was no long season of awakening, such as many think to be indispensable to a right change of heart. True, he was three days in blindness; but, if I have read the history aright, the Rubicon was crossed and the new life begun, when he said, "What wilt thou have me to do?" He had already given himself to Christ before he passed through that mystic tunnel; and the promptitude of his obedience to the Saviour's call ought to be imitated by every one to whom the Gospel is preached.

Is there here any one who has hitherto been an antagonist to Christ? Let me proclaim to him the truth which thus arrested and converted Saul: *The Lord liveth!* You have not to do merely with one who died eighteen hundred years ago, and is now no more to the world than one of the philosophers of antiquity. You have to do with one who is still living and working among us. Nor do you need any miraculous vision to convince you that this is the case; for if you can read these gospels and yet remain an unbeliever in the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then I deliberately say neither would you be persuaded though he were to smite you with his blinding light, as here he prostrated the persecutor. Have you ever given even an hour's patient consideration to the character of Jesus as it is here

portrayed, or to the solution of the question whence that character came? or how it is to be accounted for? Have you weighed well what he has done in the world during the centuries that have intervened since the crucifixion? Have you pondered what he is doing to-day? There are around you on every hand evidences of his power and presence. There are drunkards who have been made holy by his transforming spirit; sensualists who have been made pure by his cleansing grace; selfish ones who have been made benevolent by the influence of his love; whole communities that have been shaken by his truth; and nations that have been raised from barbarism to civilization by the leverage of his Gospel. There needs no miracle now, therefore, to prove that he has risen from the dead. Why, then, will you still stand against him? What has he done to you that you should resist him so? He has given himself to death for your deliverance from the bondage and bitterness of sin; he has followed you all through your life with his love; he is at this moment tenderly entreating you to let him come into your heart that he may bless you with his salvation. He knocks for admission; but, respecting your moral freedom, he will not force an entrance. He waits for your invitation! Let him not wait another moment; but undo the door now, saying, like the man of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Viewed as a public event in the history of the Christian Church, the conversion of Paul furnishes new and independent testimony to the divine origin of the Gospel. The story is perfectly authenticated. Twice did the apostle himself repeat it in detail before public tribunals; and the book in which we find it here recorded was written less than thirty years after the events were said to have occurred. Nor was it ever called in question by his contemporaries, as, supposing it to have been false, it could easily have been,

by the agency of those who had been his companions on his journey. Besides, a history like this is needed to account for the change which passed on Saul. At one time you behold him a furious persecutor of the Gospel, at another its earnest and impassioned preacher. These two things are both as absolutely certain as any facts in history can be. No one ever attempts to deny or controvert them. How then shall we explain this marvellous transition? Admit the truth of what is here recorded, and everything is accounted for; deny it, and you are driven to believe in a moral incongruity which is harder to accept than any miracle. For if this story be false, then Paul must either have been the victim of deception, or he must have been a deliberate deceiver. If he was the victim of deception, then he was either imposed upon by others, or he was imposing on himself. But he could not be imposed upon by others; for, allowing for a moment that he was a man likely to be easily duped, the early Christians, preaching as they did the purest morality, would have scorned to attempt any such deception; and even if they had attempted it, they would hardly have dreamed of trying it on one of their bitterest enemies. Besides, how could they have produced this blinding light at noonday? But, so far as we may read his character in his letters, we cannot believe that Paul was a person likely to be thus imposed upon; for, though he had an ardent temperament, he was at the same time endowed with marvellous common-sense, and had a mental independence that would not allow him to receive his opinions ready made from others. If he was deceived by others, you must account for his having been so by alleging that he had not sufficient intellectual discernment to detect the fraud, and perhaps those who are strangers to his writings will believe you; but all who have studied his matchless epistles will scout your assertion as an absurdity. But if he was not im-

posed upon by others, was he imposing upon himself? This is equally inconceivable. There have, indeed, been instances of fanaticism so working on a diseased imagination as to lead the man to suppose that he had seen miraculous appearances; but these have been in the cases either of earnest inquirers looking toward the truth, or of those who were already convinced. Here, however, Saul was a vehement partisan against it; and if there was any fanaticism about him, it was that of an antagonist, and not of a devotee. Moreover, he had a mind too well balanced to be the victim of hallucinations; and you have only to contrast the cautious way in which he speaks of another vision at a later date, when he says that he could not tell whether he was in the body or not,* with the unqualified manner in which in the present instance he affirms that he had seen the Lord, to be convinced that he was not likely to be carried away with his own fevered fancy.

There remains, therefore, only one alternative, if this story be false, and that is, that Paul was a deliberate deceiver. But what motive could he have for taking such a course? What was he to gain by this wilful imposition? Gain? So far from gaining anything, he lost all that the world holds dear by adhering to this testimony. His whole after-life was the endurance of a series of persecutions which would have ceased in a moment if he had confessed a fraud; yet never does he falter in the least degree. Through good report and through evil report; before the Jews at Jerusalem; before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa at Cæsarea; before Nero at Rome, he had still the same story to tell, and still the same appeal to make to the Lord that "appeared unto him in the way;" and though at last he might have escaped death by acknowledging that he had been a wilful impostor,

* 2 Cor. xii., 2.

he continued in the assertion of his integrity to the end. But that is not the only difficulty in the case. Was Paul a man likely to live a constant lie like this? Read his epistles. See how exalted is the morality which he inculcates, and how thorough is the conscientiousness which he enforces. He commands his readers to "abstain from all appearance of evil," and not to be "partakers of other men's sins;" he warns his followers "night and day with tears," to keep themselves in truth and purity; he directs his most withering scorn against those who, though they have named the name of Christ, are yet characterized by falsehood and dishonesty; he does not hesitate to take the course which he believes to be right, even though valued friends like Barnabas and Peter should seem to stand aloof from him; he follows the truth for its own sake, or rather for Christ's sake, clings to it as his soul's soul, in the face of every opposition, and heedless though he stands alone; yet this is the man who, on the supposition I am now arguing, deliberately deceives us in the story of his conversion. Believe that who can! I, at least, am not so credulous; and I confront those who speak of the physical impossibility of miracles, with the moral impossibility of the falsehood of such testimony. It is the fashion, in these days, to decry the study of the Christian evidences; but my conviction is that now, in a very special degree, the attention of inquirers ought to be directed to it; and in an age when sneering remarks concerning the credulity of Gospel believers are common, I am rejoiced to have an opportunity of outlining thus before you the argument for the credibility and divinity of the Gospel, founded on the conversion of Paul. Lord Lyttelton, in his essay on this subject, has given us the nearest approach which moral evidence can make to a demonstration of the truth of the whole history; and I can well understand why Dr. Samuel Johnson should have declared that "infidelity

has never been able to fabricate a specious reply to it;" and why Adolphe Monod should have said, "Next to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the Gospel has no testimony which equals that of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus."* "We have not followed cunningly devised fables!" We are the disciples of one who had a right to say, "I am the Truth!" I close this summary of the incidents of Paul's early life with two remarks.

See, in the first place, the wisdom of God's providence. Saul, as he himself tells us,† was "separated" from his birth for the work of apostleship; but though he was advancing toward middle-age before he was actually converted, yet all his intervening history was in reality a preparation for the true labor of his life. His birth and boyhood in a Greek city gave him familiarity with that language which he was to use in all his journeyings. His intimate acquaintance with the system of the Pharisees, acquired in the school of Gamaliel, enabled him to cope with those Judaizing adversaries with whom he had everywhere to contend. His skill in handicraft gave him a sturdy independence in those great commercial cities where so many of his years were spent; and his Roman citizenship entitled him to protection from wanton insult or cruel injustice throughout the Empire. A "Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet at the same time a native Hellenist and a Roman citizen, he combined in himself," as Dr. Schaff has said, "the three great nationalities of the ancient world, and was endowed with all the natural qualifications for a universal apostleship."‡ Thus He who girded Cyrus when he knew it not,

* "Saint Paul, Cinq Discours, par Adolphe Monod," p. 94.

† Gal. i., 15.

‡ "History of the Christian Church," by Philip Schaff, D.D., vol. i., p. 68.

was also preparing Saul for his after work, and it is one of the richest consolations of the Christian to know that his life as a whole is under God's plan, and that even the experiences through which he has been brought before his conversion are lifted up into, and utilized in, his higher and nobler history as a disciple of Jesus.

But my final reference must be to the Lord himself. See here the riches of the Redeemer's grace. Had the Christians then in Jerusalem been asked to name the man who was least likely to become a convert to the faith, they might probably have specified Saul of Tarsus. Yet observe how thoroughly he is changed, and how the transformation was effected by the might of gentleness. Nothing is to me more remarkable in the whole narrative than the tenderness of the remonstrance which our Lord addressed to the persecutor. If this had been a purely imaginary history, the author, who thought of making Christ appear at all, would have almost certainly represented him as coming with "flaming thunder-bolt in his red right-hand," and made him speak words of denunciation. But not thus did he show himself; he came in love; he spoke in gentleness, and the heart which might have been hardened by condemnation was melted by mercy. Hence, as if overwhelmed with the memory of this gracious tenderness, Paul said, long after, "I obtained mercy, that in me first" (that is, not first in time, but first in the degree of guilt) "Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."* If, therefore, Paul found mercy, who needs despair? Sinner, who art trembling at the remembrance of thy guilt, and overwhelmed with a sense of thy danger, take heart from such a history as this, and go to Christ in the fullest as-

* 1 Tim. i., 16.

surance that he will not cast thee out. Humble thyself before him. Take him as thy Lord and Saviour. Cry, "What wilt thou have me to do?" and he who led Paul through darkness into light will guide thee also into safety, into happiness, and into usefulness.

III.

DAMASCUS.—ARABIA.—JERUSALEM.

Acts ix., 19–30.

IN seeking to compress into one discourse a full presentation of the nature of Paul's conversion, and of its importance as a public event in the history of the Church, we were compelled to make only the briefest reference to the visit paid to the new disciple by Ananias. That visit, however, was too significant to be thus slightly treated; and therefore we return to the history, that we may set it in its proper light. Ananias is called by Luke "a certain disciple;" and he is described by Paul himself as "a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt at Damascus."* Either, therefore, he was one of those who had fled from the persecution which had burst forth in Jerusalem, or, as is more probable, he was an early adherent of the faith, who, though a stated resident in Damascus, had been brought to a knowledge of the truth, during a visit made by him to Jerusalem at some one of the annual festivals. Putting together the three narratives which are incorporated in this one book of the Acts, we learn that Ananias was commissioned in a vision to go to a certain house in a certain street in Damascus, where he would find Paul; and that, when he expressed reluctance on the ground of his knowledge of the intolerant errand on

* Acts ix., 10; xxii., 12.

which Paul had come, he was reassured by these words: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."* It is further evident that, even before Ananias had received that command, Paul had been, in a vision, prepared for his appearance, and had already heard from the Lord's own lips the forecast of his work among the Gentiles which had been given to Ananias.† Thus provision was made for a double authentication. Ananias, finding external things to be as God had described, was reassured in giving the spiritual commission; and Paul, recognizing in Ananias the man whom he had seen in his vision, had a new endorsement given to his apostleship.

Following implicitly the directions which he had received, Ananias went along Straight Street—then a noble thoroughfare, a hundred feet in width, and divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues, but now a narrow lane‡—to the house of Judas, where he found the man of Tarsus, whose sight he was the means of restoring, to whom he imparted the gift of the Holy Ghost, and whom he introduced by baptism into the Church of Christ.

Now let us weigh well the import of all this: Ananias was not the instrument of Paul's conversion; for before he appeared upon the scene Paul had been already converted. Paul could not call any man his spiritual father; but he could, and I have no doubt did, regard with peculiar tenderness the disciple who first saluted him as a "brother"§ in the Lord; and who not only baptized him with water, but was also the human agent in administering unto him the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He was to the apostle

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* Acts ix., 15, 16.
† Acts ix., 12; xxvi., 16–18.
‡ Lewin, vol. i., p. 69.
§ Acts ix., 17; xxii., 13.

what Peter and John had been to the Samaritans when, after the conversion of that people through the preaching of Philip, these apostles went down and "laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."* The spiritual crisis was over before Ananias appeared, and he did nothing, therefore, to produce that; but in administering to him the ordinance of baptism, and securing for him a welcome from the believers, he did contribute to the comfort and usefulness of Paul. Nor let any one imagine that this was a small service, or that there was little need for any supernatural agency to prepare him for rendering it. When one is shunned by others, he is apt to develop into a defiant and exclusive recluse; and if Paul had not been met by the disciples in a loving and trustful spirit, he might have become cynical, angular, or suspicious. In this way an irreparable injury might have been done to him in the very infancy of his new life; but the kindness of Ananias saved him from that peril. Then, on the other side, it must be admitted that there was ground for the exercise of caution; and the fact that, even after he had received the divine command to go to Paul, Ananias hesitated until he obtained the strongest assurance of his safety, is a proof that nothing short of such a supernatural commission as that which was given to him would have succeeded in removing his misgivings. The careful student will see a close parallel between the details connected with this visit of Ananias to Paul and those recorded in relation to that of Peter to Cornelius. As Cornelius was directed to send for Peter, so Paul was prepared for the arrival of Ananias; and as the scruples of Peter were banished by the vision on the house-top, so those of Ananias were silenced by the Lord's declaration that Paul was his chosen vessel to bear his name before the Gentiles;

* Acts viii., 14–17.

while in both cases the baptism with the Holy Ghost preceded the baptism with water; and from both alike we learn that, while there is a preparation of the convert for entering the Church, there is frequently no less needed by the Church a preparation for his reception.

Soon after his baptism Paul preached in the synagogues of Damascus, declaring that Messiah is the Son of God, with such effect that his hearers were filled with amazement, and said, "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" If we had no other record of his early Christian experiences than that which Luke has given us, we might have supposed that he continued this work among his countrymen until, being threatened with death, he was, as it were, smuggled out of Damascus by the brethren, and that he then went to Jerusalem. But in his letter to the Galatians* he tells us that before he proceeded to Jerusalem, as Luke has described, he went from Damascus into Arabia, and that it was not till after three years (which, however, in the Jewish mode of reckoning, may be simply one full year and parts of two others) that he went up to the Holy City. He does not inform us either to what particular locality in Arabia he withdrew, or what was the purpose of his seclusion. But, inasmuch as, when Elijah was in Horeb, he was commanded to return to Israel by way of Damascus—and we may thus infer that the former locality was accessible from the latter —and inasmuch as that whole district was associated with some of the most stirring passages in the histories of Moses and Elijah, we are at liberty to believe that like them Paul also was led to "the mount of God," there to receive the highest of all training for his future work, in close and con-

* Gal. i., 17, 18.

stant fellowship with his Lord. He was to be Christ's messenger to the Gentiles: it was, therefore, needful that he should be withdrawn for a season from the sphere of those Jewish influences which were so powerful in the mother Church. He was to be an apostle equal in dignity and authority to the others; it was, therefore, essential that, altogether independently of them, or of any human agency, he should be instructed in the facts of Gospel history; and it was at this time and in Arabia, as we believe, that he received those special communications to two of which he refers in his first letter to the Corinthians, in connection with his rehearsal of the institution of the Supper, and his summary of the truths which he had preached among them.* There were thus in his Arabian retirement both negative and positive advantages, which signally fitted him for the service to which he had been appointed.

How long he remained in Arabia cannot now be certainly determined; but that he spent there the larger part of the interval between his conversion and his visit to Jerusalem seems to me probable, for these two reasons: first, because such preaching as his would have been sure to bring the antagonism of the Jews to a head in a much shorter time than three years, even if we give the briefest interpretation to that phrase; and second, because, if he had been so long a public preacher of the faith in Damascus, that fact, considering the frequency of intercourse between the two cities, and the prominence which belonged to him as the legate of the high-priest, would certainly have become known to the Christians in Jerusalem. So far from that being the case, however, the believers there do not seem to have heard anything about him; for when he came to them in person, they viewed him with suspicion, and were very slow to receive

* 1 Cor. xi., 23; xv., 3.

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him into their confidence. I am therefore disposed to believe that, in the first instance, he abode with the brethren at Damascus only a very short while after his conversion; that afterward he went, for probably eighteen months, into Arabia, where he received from the Lord himself a revelation of the facts of his personal ministry; and that at the end of this time of seclusion he returned to Damascus, where he began anew to preach, this time with such added power that his Jewish antagonists plotted to take away his life.

If this view be correct, then it will be most natural to put his journey to Arabia, and sojourn in it, between the twenty-first and twenty-second verses of Luke's history;* and the revelations made to him in his retirement will explain the distinct advance in his preaching which seems to be indicated in the latter verse, as well as the greater intensity of the result by which it was followed. At first he preached "Christ, that he is the Son of God," setting himself, as I judge the meaning to be, to prove that Messiah is a divine person. That, however, might be done simply in the way of exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures; and, though the doctrine sought to be established was one peculiar to the Christians, we can easily imagine that Jews would listen to its promulgation with at least the interest of curiosity, to which would be added amazement that Paul should be its advocate. But in the twenty-second verse it is affirmed that "he proved that Jesus is very Christ." Now, to do that effectively requires three things: namely, an acquaintance with the Messianic prophecies; a knowledge of the facts of Jesus's life; and a perception of the correspondence between the two, so that the facts are seen to be the fulfilment of the prophecies. But up till the time of his conversion, so

* Acts ix.

far as appears, Paul was largely ignorant of the incidents connected with the birth, baptism, and public ministry of the Lord Jesus; and as he was far removed from other competent instructors, some such revelations from the Lord as those which we have supposed that he received in Arabia would be needed to make him familiar with them. Now, if these revelations were actually given him at this particular time, we have at once the explanation of this double description of his preaching in the synagogues of Damascus. To proclaim that "Jesus is the very Messiah" was something more than to declare that Messiah is the Son of God. The latter is the major premise of a syllogism, of which the former is the minor, and the conclusion from both is that Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah, is the Son of God. The exposition of the one would awaken astonishment; the proof of the other would create animosity; and the conclusion from both would rouse all the fury of the Jewish heart. To hear his own Scriptures quoted in demonstration of the fact that the Nazarene was the Son of God, was more than the Pharisee could endure. It was wresting his very stronghold from him; and therefore, when he found that the argument was against him, he took counsel to kill the reasoner. It is always easier to use physical force than intellectual; and they who are most conscious of deficiency in the latter resort most readily to the former. He who, like John Locke, "thinks himself more concerned to quit and renounce any opinion of his own, than to oppose that of another, when truth is against it,"* will welcome light when and whence soever it comes; but he who fears to face the day, or seeks to evade discussion, does so either because he has some consciousness of weakness, or because some party prejudice is assailed or some selfish craft endangered. In any case,

* "Essay concerning Human Understanding," Epistle to the Reader.

to war against argument by force is as unavailing as it is irrational; for opinion is too impalpable to be pierced by any sword of steel, and truth has a vitality as eternal as God.

When the disciples in Damascus became aware of Paul's danger, and knew that the gates of the city were watched night and day to prevent his escape, they took him to a friend who lived in a house one of whose walls was at the same time the wall of the city, and through a window which looked out into the open country they let him down in a basket like those which even yet are employed in these parts for hoisting and lowering purposes. The details of this adventure are thus given by Paul himself: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."* But the very particularity of this statement has occasioned considerable difficulty; for in no ancient history is there any record of Damascus having been about this time under the power, or in the possession of Aretas, who was King of Arabia Petræa. When it came into the hands of the Romans it was assigned to the province of Syria; and it does seem rather singular to find it spoken of here as governed by an ethnarch under Aretas. But it ought to be borne in mind that in all histories there are frequent gaps which have to be filled in from other sources; and there are traces of the existence of such a hiatus here, with, moreover, certain indications on both sides of it which render it highly probable that Aretas did occupy Damascus about this very date. Thus among extant coins of Damascus there are some bearing the image of Augustus and others that of Tiberius, and others again having that of Nero; but none

* 2 Cor. xi., 32, 33.

have been discovered bearing the likeness of either of the intervening emperors, Caligula or Claudius.* Of course, this is not in itself conclusive; for coins with the likenesses of those two emperors may have been in existence, though none have been found; and it would be as unsafe for us to reason from their absence alone, as it is for the geologist to depend entirely on what he calls "negative evidence." But if there should be other circumstances which make it not improbable that the city was, during part of those reigns, in other hands, then this absence of the coins will come in as a confirmation. Now there are such circumstances; for about this time there was war between Aretas and that Herod whose name is stained by the murder of John the Baptist. There had been some dispute between them as to some matter of boundary, and that had been aggravated by the fact that Herod, who had been married to the daughter of Aretas, had divorced her, in order to take Herodias, his own niece and the wife of his brother Philip, as his paramour. In the fortune of war the army of Herod had been defeated; but as he was a favorite with the emperor, Tiberius made the quarrel his own, and ordered his general, Vitellius, to proceed to his assistance and take Aretas either dead or alive. Vitellius, however, had a personal grudge against Herod, and made no great haste to obey the imperial commands. He went, indeed, very leisurely about the affair, and while he was on his way, the news of the death of the emperor (A.D. 37) reached him. Upon hearing this he immediately suspended his march, and waited for orders from the successor of Tiberius. It is by no means improbable, therefore, that, just at this juncture, Aretas having been relieved from all opposition, took possession of Damascus, which lay in the immediate neighborhood of his own territory, and

* Lewin, vol. i., p. 68.

was perhaps, at one time, included in it. Some, indeed, have supposed that, as Aretas had been most shamefully used by Herod, and as Vitellius was known to have no good-will to the Jewish monarch, the Roman general took the opportunity, which the emperor's death afforded, of doing justice to the one, and taking vengeance on the other, by giving to Aretas the sovereignty of Damascus. Others have thought that, as the Emperor Caligula did in many instances reverse the policy of Tiberius, especially in Eastern affairs, he may have given Damascus to Aretas. Thus, then, stands the case. There is no mention made by ancient historians of this occupation of Damascus by Aretas ; but there is nothing said by them which makes such an occupation impossible, while other circumstances recorded by them are such as to leave room for it, and, indeed, to make it extremely probable.

But now let us follow the night-wrapped fugitive. He took his way to Jerusalem, retracing his steps along that road whereon he had been some time before confronted by the Lord. Perhaps the contrast between the two journeys forced itself upon his reflection. Then he was the leader of an important expedition, trusted by the authorities of the Jewish Church, and looking forward to some place of distinction in the council of his nation ; now he is going forth an outcast, disowned by his countrymen, and fleeing for his life. Then he was surrounded by a band of ardent followers and admirers, each of whom esteemed it an honor to have a place under his command ; now he is alone and friendless, with "none so poor as do him reverence." Alone? Friendless? Nay, that is but to judge from external appearance ; for, though invisible, his Lord is near, filling the silence for him with his fellowship, and brightening the darkness for him with the light of his countenance. He has made what the world calls a tremendous sacrifice.

Yet there are no misgivings in his heart; no lingering looks behind at that which he has left; no vain regrets over what "might have been;" but he goes steadily forward, trusting in the guidance and protection of Him "whose he is and whom he serves."

His motive in going to Jerusalem at this time was, as he tells the Galatians, "to see Peter."* He may have heard much about that ardent and illustrious apostle from the brethren at Damascus; and if, as we have conjectured, he had received the facts of the Gospel narrative by revelation from the Lord himself in Arabia, there would be much in them to awaken in him an eager desire to make the acquaintance of one who, in spite of waywardness and rashness, was still so tenderly beloved by the Master. But when he arrived at the Holy City it seemed as if his purpose would never be accomplished; for though he attempted to join himself to the disciples, they treated him with coldness and suspicion. "They were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." This conduct on their part was natural, for they had not forgotten how "he had persecuted the Church and wasted it;" but it was neither brotherly nor becoming. If Jesus, their Lord, had received him, who were they that they should reject him? Was it not the glory of their Master that he was the friend of sinners? Why then should they turn away from the overtures of Paul? Something like such musings as these seems to have filled the mind of Barnabas, for he took him by the hand and led him to the apostles, dwelling much, in his introduction of him to their notice, on the fact that the Lord had appeared unto him, and on his boldness as a preacher in the synagogues of Damascus. This opened up his way to their confidence, and we may well believe that, on discovering Paul's real

* Gal. i., 18.

character, the warm-hearted Peter, eager to make amends for his former coldness, took him to his own home, and entertained him with the greatest hospitality. Thus, at the very outset of his career, he who was to be the apostle of the Gentiles was brought into closest fellowship with him who was the apostle of the circumcision. Their paths, though occasionally intersecting each other, were to be quite distinct; but they both intensely loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and were eager to advance his cause. Sometimes they might seem to be in antagonism; but those days of pleasant fellowship, never to be forgotten by either, would enable them to understand each other, and would give them implicit confidence in each other. The only other apostle whom Paul saw at this time was James, the kinsman of the Lord; but it does not appear that the intimacy with him was so close as it was with Peter, with whom he abode fifteen days.

It would be wrong to imagine, however, that Paul was content with this private fellowship with Peter, and did no public work in Jerusalem at this time. On the contrary, he could not be idle; and being a Hellenist himself, he found his special sphere among that class, for we read that "he disputed with the Grecians." The word "disputed" is the same as that which is used to describe Stephen's labors. It implies that he began to preach in a public place, and, like our modern missionaries in the bazaars of Indian cities, gave opportunity for discussion. But those who entered the lists with him could not stand before him, and began to plot against his life. This led to his departure from Jerusalem, as a similar conspiracy against him had driven him from Damascus. But he went away with reluctance. Perhaps he had felt a little humiliated at the manner of his escape from Damascus—as indeed his mention of it to the Corinthians in immediate connection with infirmities* seems to suggest

* 2 Cor. xi., 30, 32, 33.

—and he did not care to go through a similar experience again. Perhaps there was a desire within him to prove his zeal as a disciple in the very place in which his fury as a persecutor had been most conspicuous. But for whatever reason, it was not until he received a peremptory command from the Lord that he consented to withdraw. This is evident from his speech made long after to the mob from the castle stairs of the same city, in which he says, "And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."* It thus appears that Paul at first did not wish to leave Jerusalem, but was anxious to remain in it, that he might as far as possible counteract the evil which he had formerly done there. Probably, also, for he was a Jew with all the education of a strict Pharisee, there may have been within him an unspoken reluctance to accept his mission among the Gentiles, and a desire to labor among the Jews. But all these feelings, if they did exist, were rebuked by the brief and peremptory order that would brook no parley, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Some one may be ready to ask how these two accounts—that in the history, and that in the speech just quoted—can possibly be consistent? If Paul went from Jerusalem because the brethren there wished to send him away from

* Acts xxii., 17–21.

the danger which was menacing his life, how could he say that he left the Holy City because the Lord commanded him? I answer by asking you to look narrowly at the two narratives themselves. That in the ninth chapter tells us what the brethren did, and why they did it. That in the twenty-second chapter informs us why Paul consented to do as they advised. He had been opposed to their suggestion. He had been apparently so troubled by it as to make it a subject of earnest prayer; and he yielded only after he had received the positive command of the Lord to do as they had advised. So they accompanied him to Cæsarea, where he took ship for Tarsus, his native city, in which he abode until, at the summons of Barnabas, he came to do the work of the Lord in Antioch.

You must have observed that the materials for the connected history which I have this evening endeavored to put before you have been drawn from different sections of the book of The Acts, from the Epistle to the Galatians, and from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Now, the relation of these several writings to each other and to the narrative as a whole, and the proof which they incidentally furnish of the credibility of the history itself, have been set forth in the most masterly manner by Paley in his "Horæ Paulinæ," and perhaps this may be the best opportunity which may arise for drawing your attention to that admirable treatise. Its author, who has been followed in the same line by Birks, in his "Horæ Apostolicæ," and by Blunt in his "Scriptural Coincidences," sets himself to bring before his readers what he has called "undesigned coincidences" between the history of The Acts and the incidents referred to, in passing, in the epistles, as also between the statements in the different epistles themselves; and he shows that these can be accounted for only on the theory that Luke and Paul wrote independently of each other, and were telling things

which had actually happened. He does not build so much upon the existence of coincidences as upon the incidental and undesigned character of these coincidences. He proves, first, that The Acts could not have been compiled by a forger out of the details furnished by the epistles; next, that the epistles could not have been constructed by a deceiver out of the particulars given in The Acts; and finally, that the epistles and The Acts could not have been both the work of one writer, who had deliberately designed to make them harmonize with each other. Then, by the minute examination of each epistle as compared with The Acts and with all the other epistles, he unfolds a number of most striking and generally overlooked coincidences, which produce on the mind of the reader an impression not unlike that which is made on an intelligent jury, when the incidental observation of one witness supplies a link which had been felt to be wanting in the testimony of another. As Dr. Kitto has well explained it: "In the leading narrative in The Acts of the Apostles, Luke has left a chasm which he has nowhere else supplied. But that chasm we are enabled to fill up by the apostle himself, in letters which were written without any design to complete the history of Luke. The two accounts are therefore like the two parts of a tally—neither is complete without the other; and yet, being put together, they so exactly fit into each other, as to show that the one is precisely adjusted to and is the counterpart of the other. And as these two parts are supplied by different persons, without the least design of adapting them to each other, they show that the writers had formed no collusion or agreement to impose upon the world; that they are separate and independent witnesses; that they were honest men; and that their narratives are true records."*

* "Daily Bible Illustrations," vol. viii., pp. 160, 161.

Let me give an illustration from the ground over which we have come to-night. In the matter of this journey to Arabia, which is mentioned by Paul in writing to the Galatians, it is clear that there was no collusion between Luke and Paul to deceive; for, as Paley has put it, "If the narrative in The Acts had been made up from the epistles, it is impossible that this journey should be passed over in silence; if the epistle had been compiled out of what the writer had read of Paul's history in The Acts, it is unaccountable that it should have been inserted."* Yet while all design to enforce harmony between the two is thus eliminated, notice the fact that in Gal. i., 17, Paul says, "I went into Arabia, and *returned again* unto Damascus." Now, in his letter, Paul had not before mentioned Damascus. Its name comes in here in the most incidental way. He had no need, for the purpose of his argument, to refer to that city at all; yet when alluding to his journey into Arabia, he is carried on most naturally to name the place to which he returned from that country; and he names the city which corresponds to that mentioned in the history of his conversion.

A similar argument has been raised by Paley on the brevity of Paul's sojourn at Jerusalem at this time. He was there, as he tells us in the letter to the Galatians, only fifteen days. Now hear our author: "The direct account of the same journey in Acts ix., 28, determines nothing concerning the time of his continuance there; or, rather, this account taken by itself would lead us to suppose that Paul's abode at Jerusalem had been longer than fifteen days. But turn to the twenty-second chapter of The Acts, and you will find a reference to this visit to Jerusalem, which plainly indicates that Paul's visit must have been of short duration:

* "Horæ Paulinæ," chap. v., No. II.

'And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.' Here we have the general terms of one text so explained by a distant text in the same book, as to bring an indeterminate expression into close conformity with a specification delivered in another book; a species of consistency not, I think, usually found in fabulous relations."*

These are by no means the most striking results of the application of Paley's principles to the investigation of the book of The Acts of the Apostles in its relation to the epistles of Paul; but if they will serve to turn your attention to a valuable treatise, now, I fear, too much neglected, I shall be greatly delighted. The youth who peruses it with care will receive thereby one of the best lessons on testimony which can be given him; and, indeed, if I were asked by one preparing for practice at the Bar to name the best work known to me for fitting the mind to analyze and compare different instalments of evidence, I would reply, without a moment's hesitation, Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ." But, irrespective altogether of its value in this subordinate department, it gives the next thing to moral certainty as to the credibility of the statements made both by Luke in his narrative and by Paul in his letters. It may require some patient thought and diligent study to master it fully; but when it is mastered by a man, he will be forever proof against the assaults of infidelity on the sacred histories.

I conclude with three practical reflections. Let us learn here the minute care which God has over his people. He gives to Ananias the street and the house in the great city

* "Horæ Paulinæ," chap. v., No. VIII.

of Damascus where Paul is sitting in his blindness, and sends him thither to his help. But though the commission came to Ananias supernaturally, we must not imagine that similar things—similar, I mean, in kind, though lower in degree—are not occurring now. Dr. Thomas Guthrie tells of an old widow in his country parish suffering from paralysis, whom he was led in a remarkable way to visit, just in time to save her from being burnt to death, and he reasons in this way about it: "By what law of nature was I moved that day, instead of visiting other sick, to turn my steps to the dell and cottage of this poor old woman? By what law of nature, when I lingered on the road, was I moved, without the remotest idea of her danger, to cut short, against all my inclinations, an interesting conversation, and hurry on to the house, which I reached just at the very nick of time—one or two minutes later the flames had caught her clothes, and I had found her in a blaze of fire."* You could not say that the eloquent minister was sent by a miraculous message, and yet who but a materialist can doubt that somehow God moved him to do as he did? And such things are happening continually. So let the people of God take comfort. Wherever they are, and whatever be their circumstances, God knows everything about them; and in some way or other he will manifest his care for them. His letters are all accurately addressed, and none of them go astray.

We can see, also, in the second place, how God gives special training for special work. We have already observed how, even in his unconverted life, Paul was undergoing preparation for his future career; but all that was in a manner external. An internal and spiritual fitness was still required,

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* "Out of Harness, Sketches Narrative and Descriptive," by Thomas Guthrie, D.D., p. 311.

and that was furnished, not only by his conversion, but also by his communings with the Lord in Arabia. He who would preach the Gospel with power must be himself a believer in the Lord. The secret of true, heart-stirring eloquence in the pulpit is, next after the power of the Holy Ghost, that which the French Abbé has very happily called "the accent of conviction" in the speaker. Behind every appeal that Paul made to sinners, there was the memory of that wonderful experience through which he passed on his way to Damascus; and therefore we are not surprised that he *so* preached as either to secure men's faith or to rouse their antagonism. But his conversion alone, without his Arabian revelations, would not have made him the apostle he became. In the desert he met his Lord, and received from him many important spiritual communications. There, too, he meditated on the truths revealed to him, and poured out his heart in prayer for a thorough understanding of their meaning and a full realization of their power. Thus he came back to Damascus, if not with a face glowing like that of Moses when he descended from Sinai, at least with a heart filled and fired with love to Him who had there unfolded to him the mysteries of his Gospel. Now, what Paul thus received from the Lord has been given to us by evangelists and apostles in the New Testament Scriptures. Our Arabia, therefore, will be the study and the closet in which we pore over these precious pages, and seek to comprehend their many-sided significance, as well as to imbibe the spirit by which they are pervaded. He who would preach to others must be much alone with his Bible and his Lord; else, when he appears before his people, he will send them to sleep with his pointless platitudes or starve them with his empty conceits. Get you to Arabia, then, ye who would become the instructors of your fellow-men! Get you to the closet and the study! Give your days and nights to the in-

vestigation of this Book; and let everything you produce from it be made to glow with a white-heat in the forge of your own heart, and be hammered on the anvil of your own experience!

We may learn, in the last place, to give a cordial welcome to new converts and new-comers in the Church. Ananias went as soon as he was sent, and said, "Brother Saul." Oh how these words must have thrilled the heart of the blinded one! And how much he would be pained when, on his first appearance as a disciple at Jerusalem, the members of the mother Church stood aloof from him, and treated him with coldness. Blessings on thee, Barnabas, for taking him then so warmly by the hand! Thou wast always a son of consolation, but never didst thou prove thy right to that name more convincingly than when thou stood'st the friend of the suspected and avoided Paul!

But is there not here an example for us? How many, especially in our large cities, come and go to and from our churches for weeks, it may be even for months, without any one speaking to them a cheering word! We may say, indeed, that they ought to make themselves known, and introduce themselves through some of the evangelical associations to its members; and this, to some extent, is true; but the first advance should be made by the Church; and it seems to me that every congregation should have a Barnabas committee, composed of some of its kindliest members, who should undertake this Christ-like service. I fear that not a few are annually lost by all our city churches for lack of some one to take them lovingly by the hand and lead them into those Christian circles, where they would be reminded of the homes which they had left, and shielded from the dangers to which they are exposed.

How often, too, when some one who has been prominently connected with a denomination that is not generally con-

dered evangelical comes out and declares himself for that which is counted orthodox, he is met with freezing suspicion, and kept at a distance by the picket-guard that is always peering out for spies; or if some, like Barnabas, should put themselves beside him, they will be suspected along with him, and draw down upon themselves abundant expostulation. "Wait," say these cautious ones, "until he has been duly quarantined; let him prove his steadfastness, and then we will receive him;" not seeing that their cold reserve is just the thing most calculated to send him back. So, again, in dealing with young converts, how slow some are to believe in the genuineness and thoroughness of God's own work. It was not so with Barnabas, and it ought not to be so with us. We knew a good Christian lady who went to her pastor for the addresses of those who were received from time to time into the Church, that she might personally call upon them, and congratulate them on the stand which they had made. There was a deaconess without the name! —a true daughter of consolation! and after her visits the friends to whom she had spoken began to discover that there was more in church fellowship than the mere sitting down together at the communion-table. If there were more like her in all our churches, these spiritual societies would become more like "households of faith," and the coming in of each new member would create a joy like that which hails the advent of a new-born babe into every rightly constituted home. Where are ye, oh ye Barnabases? Look around, and see if there be not field enough to-night for beginning operations.

IV.

A YEAR AT ANTIOCH.

ACTS xi., 19; xiii., 3.

WE have no means of tracing definitely the movements of Paul during the interval between his departure from Cæsarea, and his reception of that summons from Barnabas which brought him ultimately to Antioch. The only reference which he makes to this portion of his history is in these words: "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."* From this statement it has been conjectured that, making his head-quarters in Tarsus, he labored not in that city alone, but in the principal places of these two districts of Syria and Cilicia, which were so closely identified with each other, that their joint names appear in history, as Howson has alleged,† "almost as a generic geographical term." It may be, therefore, that at this time the apostle founded those churches, to which, as well as to the Gentiles in Antioch, the first apostolic letter was addressed.‡ Of one thing, however, we may be sure, and that is that he was not idle. Perhaps, beginning his work of ministry first in his own family, he was now

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* Gal. i., 21–23.

† "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," vol. i., p. 115.

‡ Acts xv., 23.

made a blessing to his sister. Perhaps he found a sphere on the week-days in the tent-maker's shop in which he wrought for his bread; and on the Sabbath-days in the synagogues, where his kinsmen according to the flesh were wont to meet for prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. But though we cannot certainly specify the methods which he adopted, or the places which he visited, we may be very confident that by work, by meditation, and by prayer, he was not only meeting all the demands which the present made upon him, but also "making himself," in the noblest fashion, for the great future that was before him.

Like many another man, he had to be content to labor for a season in comparative obscurity, though conscious all the time of the possibilities that were within him, and seeing continually, in the dim and shadowy beyond, a vague outline of the greatness which he was yet to attain. But, though he longed for a favorable opportunity of putting forth all his powers for the benefit of his fellow-men and the glory of his Lord, this interval of unrecognition neither soured him at those who were already prominent in the Church, nor disposed him to remit, in the least degree, the exertions which he was making to fill the sphere in which he was at the moment placed. As the servant of Christ, he was equally ready to wait on his will, and to work at his bidding; and he was wise enough to understand that only by doing the little that was now required of him could he clear the way for the accomplishment of those great things which the Lord had declared were yet to be achieved by him through suffering. By showing himself faithful in that which was least, at Tarsus, he rose to the opportunity of manifesting equal fidelity in the greater centres of Antioch Ephesus, and Rome.

Nor had he long to wait; for if the chronology of Dr. Howson be correct, about five years after his departure

from Jerusalem, and in the year A.D. 44, his friend Barnabas came to Tarsus with news which must have stirred his soul to its depths, and with a request which must have roused the noblest enthusiasm of his nature. He told Paul how, in a singular way, Peter — the most unlikely among the twelve to have done anything of the kind — had preached to the Gentile Cornelius and his friends, and had received them on the same footing as Jews into the company of the disciples. He described the dissatisfaction which had been created at Jerusalem by that act, and recounted the explanation of his procedure which Peter made, and which so silenced the prejudices even of the most exclusive that they had all "glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." He informed him, also, of the movements of certain disciples, who, fleeing from Jerusalem on account of the persecution, had gone to Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, and had preached the Gospel at first only to Jews, but at length, either led on by the direction of the Holy Ghost, or encouraged by hearing of what Peter had done, had preached also to the Gentiles with such evident divine endorsement that "a great number believed and turned to the Lord." He further explained, that when the brethren at Jerusalem had heard of these things, they had held a conference at which he had been appointed to go to Antioch and examine the movement, and report upon it; that he had fulfilled this mission, and had been gladdened by everything which he had seen and heard; that he meant to return to Antioch himself, and assist in carrying forward the good work which had been so singularly begun; and that he very earnestly desired that Paul should go with him and join him in the enterprise.

This was just the sort of opportunity for which Paul had been waiting; and its attraction for him would be increased by the fact that it came to him through Barnabas. With-

out any assumed reluctance, therefore, but in honest, manly, hopeful joy, Paul once more bade adieu to Tarsus, and went with his true yoke-fellow to begin that missionary work among the Gentiles, in the prosecution of which the Church emerged from its cradle, and walked forth, divested of the swaddling-bands of Judaism, to benefit the world at large.

The city to which Paul now went was admirably adapted for becoming the second centre of the Christian Church. Situated on the river Orontes, somewhat less than twenty miles by land, but more than forty by water, from its junction with the Mediterranean, it stood almost in the angle which the coast of Syria running northward makes with that of Asia Minor running eastward, having behind it the valley between the ranges of Taurus and Lebanon, through which alone, for many leagues, the trade of the interior could find its way to the coast. It was thus excellently placed for commercial communication between the East and the West. It was founded by Seleucus Nicator, who named it after his father Antiochus; and it was greatly enlarged by Antiochus Epiphanes, who surrounded it with a wall, and beautified it with a magnificent street, which was four miles in length and adorned by double colonnades. When, about B.C. 65, it fell before the Roman general, Pompey, it was made a free city, and permitted to be governed by its own laws and garrisoned by its own troops. Under the Empire, the successive wearers of the purple seem to have vied with each other in contributing to its embellishment. Augustus, through his minister, Agrippa, added a suburb; Tiberius restored the walls; and even the brutal Caligula sought the favor of its citizens by constructing an aqueduct and baths.

Its population included many heterogeneous elements. The upper classes, as we might call them, were mainly Greeks, either by birth or by descent, and used that language which Plato has immortalized by his philosophy, and

Demosthenes by his eloquence. The imperial officials were Romans, and spoke in the Latin tongue; and the masses, as they would now be styled, were Syrians. But mingling among these, yet preserving religiously their distinction from them, were many Jews who had been attracted to Antioch, not only by its facilities for commerce, but also by the fact that its laws placed them on an equality with other citizens. Hither they brought their sacred books, and as these were now accessible to Gentiles in the Septuagint version, we may conjecture that some of the more thoughtful heathens, disgusted by the worn-out idolatries of their own people, followed the example of "Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch,"* and adopted the pure monotheism of the Old Testament. Added to these permanent residents of the city were casual travellers, of whom some were always to be found in its streets. Here the merchants from the far East met their customers from the West, and exchanged commodities with each other. "He who sits in our market-place," says a writer of the fourth century, "may study the customs of all cities in the world;" and such was its importance as a centre of influence, that, though in point of population only the third city in the Empire, it was frequently referred to as a second Rome. In the days of Cicero it was renowned for the culture of its inhabitants, among whom were some men of genius and learning. But though thus eminent for architecture, and literature, and commerce, it was, like all the cities of pagan civilization, equally notorious for the luxury and lasciviousness of its people. In its immediate neighborhood was Daphne, with its grove and temple dedicated to Apollo and Artemis, which have been so eloquently described by Gibbon,† and in which the grossest and most debasing sin was committed under the

* Acts vi., 5.

† "Decline and Fall," chap. xxiii.

guise of worship. In the adjacent fields, the races and other games to which the Greeks were so devoted, were celebrated, at first irregularly, but latterly at stated intervals, with a magnificence unsurpassed on the plain of Olympia itself. These occasions drew immense crowds to the city, and were frequently marked by the most revolting revelry. Indeed, we may affirm that everything which could be done to gild the native hideousness of vice, and minister to the seductiveness of pleasure, was done at Antioch. A revenue of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, derived from the legacy of a wealthy Roman, was annually expended on the public sports. Rewards were offered by opulent citizens to the man who should import or invent a new luxury, and the panders to pleasure of every kind flocked thither incessantly.*

Into this city, then, with its stir, and commerce, and luxury, and idolatry, and vice, these few disciples, driven from Jerusalem by persecution, carried the Gospel of Christ; and the first effects of their labors as seen by Barnabas, were so marked, not only for their endorsement of that which was behind, but also for the prophecy of that which was before, that he went to Tarsus and brought Paul back with him to assist in the enterprise to which they had both alike consecrated their lives. And yet, even with Paul as one of the laborers, how quixotic does that enterprise appear! It was, to merely human view, as if a few poor Chinamen should come to-day into the midst of this city, with its conglomerate of nationalities and its great dark spots of immorality and intemperance, for the purpose of converting us all to the religion of Confucius. But One unseen went with Barnabas

* See for the materials from which this paragraph has been constructed, Gibbon, *ubi supra*; Plumptre, "St. Paul in Asia Minor," pp. 35–44; Lewin, vol. i., pp. 91, 96; Howson, vol. i., pp. 131–136.

and Paul; for He who spoke the parable of the mustard-seed was by their side, and the grain which they planted soon sprung up into a glorious tree.

The immediate success which they were permitted to see was great; but, after the description which has just been given of the Antioch to which Paul originally went, it may help you to understand the sort of revolution which the Gospel produced, if I put you down for a moment or two in the middle of the fourth century, and ask you to look at a scene which was witnessed in its neighborhood about the year A.D. 360. Even within the limits of the apostolic age, Antioch was one of the strongholds of the Christian Church; from it, too, shortly after the beginning of the second century, the martyr Ignatius was taken to Rome by the orders of the Emperor Trajan, and there devoured by wild beasts; but in the time of Julian so completely had the tide been turned, that when the apostate emperor went to Antioch on occasion of the annual heathen festival, and made every effort to restore the ancient glory of the former idolatry, no offering was presented along with his own, on the altar of the Daphnian Apollo, save "a single goose, provided at the expense of a priest, the pale and solitary inhabitant of the decayed temple."* Such a contrast is most striking in itself; but it becomes more suggestive when we remember that the change had been effected by no enginery of war, but by an influence as quiet as that by which the iceberg, when floated down from the polar regions into warmer latitudes, falls asunder and disappears. For the greater portion of the interval between the days of Paul and those of Julian, the Christians had been the objects of the bitterest persecution; and yet Christianity, by the force of the truth and love of which it is the embodiment, had conquered idolatry even

* Gibbon, *ubi supra*.

in its strongest seats. A fact like that may well cheer us amid discouragements, and give us patient faith while we plod on at our unceasing work.

Paul's first sojourn in Antioch lasted "a whole year;" during which we are told that he and Barnabas "assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." We have no record of the discourses which they delivered; no description of the plans which they followed; no enumeration of the converts whom they made. But a most interesting indication of the central theme of their teachings, as well as a most remarkable illustration of the stir they made, is incidentally given us by the historian in the simple statement: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch;" for I cannot but conclude that this name was coined and given to them by their heathen neighbors. Evidently they did not choose it for themselves; since, whenever they had occasion to refer to one another, they used such words as "brethren," "saints," "believers," "disciples," or such a phrase as "those of that way," and the like; but we never find them calling each other Christians. Indeed, this term is employed in only two other places in the New Testament, and in both of these it so occurs as to suggest that its common use originally was by heathens when they had occasion to refer to the disciples of Jesus. Thus Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;"* and Peter says, "if any man suffer as a Christian," that is, suffer being styled a Christian. If, therefore, the usage of evangelists and apostles is any guide to us on such a subject, we may certainly infer from that, in this case, that this name did not originate with the disciples themselves.

Neither is it likely that it was given them by the Jews; for the word Christ is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew

* Acts xxvi., 28; 1 Peter iv., 16.

Messiah; and therefore, if they had called the "brethren" by this name, they would have been nominally, at least, admitting that Jesus was the Messiah — a thing which they were not likely to do.

Further, there is no evidence that this designation was given to the disciples by direction of God; for though the Greek word here translated "were called" is frequently used to describe the giving of a divine communication, it is in these cases invariably connected with such phrases as these: "of God," "of the angel," "in a dream," etc. Now, in the narrative before us, there is no hint of any such supernatural message, and therefore we are not warranted in believing that the name "Christian" is of divine origin.

There remains, therefore, only one other hypothesis, namely, that it was given to the disciples by the heathen, and much may be advanced in favor of that view of the case. The reception of Gentiles into the Church, without their being first required to become proselytes to the Jewish faith, would convince on-lookers that the religion which Paul preached was not a part of Judaism, and thus it would become necessary to adopt a name for its disciples which would not confound them with Jews. To this consideration let it be added that, according to some ancient authors, the inhabitants of Antioch were proverbial for inventing nicknames; and that the Greek termination of this particular word indicates that it came from those to whom that language was vernacular; and then it will be felt that we may safely trace the origin of the term Christian to the heathen population of this important city.

Now, if this opinion be accepted, the coinage and currency of this new name is a proof, all the more powerful because it is incidental, of the prominence into which already the preachers of the new faith had come. Be it remembered that in those days there were no newspapers to chronicle

their movements or give publicity to their teachings. They had to be content with meeting-places in obscure localities; they had few opportunities of coming into contact with the people save on the streets, in the market-place, or in private houses; yet in the face of all these difficulties they made such progress as to force themselves on the attention of the community, and draw upon themselves the derision for which the inhabitants of the city were proverbial.

And the name itself was one which speaks volumes for the kind of instruction which Paul and his companions gave. The heathen did not call the disciples after Paul or Barnabas, but after Christ. Why? Because these early disciples made so much of Christ. To him they sung their hymns as to their God. His example was their pattern. His word was their law. His atonement was their trust. His cross was their glory. He was the centre round which all else for them revolved. He was the judge to whose final assize they made their appeal, and the advocate to whom they intrusted all their causes. He was the source of their hope, the fountain of their strength, and the Lord of their lives. In a word, he was to them the Gospel; and if any one had asked them where they were to go to learn its doctrines, they would have replied substantially as Henry Martyn did, when a Persian Sufi put the same question to him, "You will find them all in Christ himself." The fact of incarnation they saw in his person; the doctrine of atonement they learned at his cross; and as they repeated week by week the story of his resurrection, they felt that by him "life and immortality were brought to light." Thus it was not wonderful that men styled them Christians; for, as one has quaintly said, "Because they so often called upon his name, his name at length was called on them." Brethren, what is Christ to us? Let us face that question honestly, and answer it truly. Then shall we discover whether or not we

are the faithful representatives of those who were first designated after him. This will test us as the acid tests the gold; and if in the discourses of the pulpit Christ is not exalted, or in the lives of the hearers Christ is not seen to be honored, then, no matter what we may call ourselves, we are destitute of that which first attracted attention to believers, and secured for them this distinctive appellation.

At the end of this year of happy labor in Antioch, the Church in that city was visited by certain prophets from Jerusalem. These were men who, by the laying on of the apostles' hands, had received a gift by which they were enabled to speak to others on behalf of God, either in the way of foretelling future events, or of addressing to them needful exhortation. One of them, named Agabas, gave warning of a famine which was soon to spread desolation over the world; and, believing his words, the disciples made a contribution for the brethren in Jerusalem, who seemed somehow always to be the first to feel the pressure of such seasons of scarcity, and the last to reap the benefits which sprung out of commercial revival. With these gifts the Christians of Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem, not only to insure their faithful presentation, but also to add to them the warmer greeting of sympathy and love.

Luke tells us that this famine "came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar." Now, history mentions three famines as having existed during the reign of that emperor, one connected more immediately with Greece, another with Rome, and still another with Judæa and its neighborhood. Josephus mentions the last, and gives special praise to Helena, the Queen of Adiabene, for the liberality which she showed on the occasion. It is probable, therefore, that there was, in the prediction of Agabas, a primary reference to that time of scarcity; yet, as he speaks of it as extending "throughout all the world," it would be an unusual restric-

tion of these universal terms to confine their meaning to Palestine. This consideration has led some eminent interpreters to regard his prophecy here as supplemental to that of our Lord himself, in which he named "famines* in divers places" as among the indications of the approach of the destruction of Jerusalem. Agabas may have been speaking of the beginning of those calamities which, coming in many forms and lasting for many years, culminated in the downfall of the Holy City. Thus we can account both for the wide sweep of the terms which he employs, and for the particular application made of them by his hearers to the case of their brethren in Jerusalem.†

When Barnabas and Paul reached Jerusalem at this time, they found the Church there heaving with the after-swell of that excitement which had been produced by the martyrdom of James by Herod, and the imprisonment and escape of Peter. Doubtless they were warmly welcomed by the brethren. Doubtless, also, the report of their labors was received with delight, and the offering of their benevolence with gratitude. But, in the circumstances, it might not be deemed safe for them to stay long in the Jewish capital, while the interesting state of matters in Antioch would tend to make them impatient to return to their labors there. Thus we account for the facts that no references to this visit to Jerusalem are made by Paul in any of his letters, and that it is passed over with so slight a record by the historian of The Acts.

After they went back to Antioch, a distinct step in advance was taken by the Church there. Among its members who had been endowed with supernatural gifts of prophecy and teaching were Simeon, also called Niger, or the black;

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* Matt. xxiv., 7.

† See Fairbairn's "Imperial Bible Dictionary," art. Agabas.

Lucius, a native of Cyrene—that African city from which had come the Simeon who had borne the cross of Christ—and Manaen, the foster-brother of that Herod who had been tetrarch of Galilee when the Lord was crucified. As these men, with Barnabas and Paul, and the brethren of the Church, were engaged in the service of the Lord, with fasting and prayer, a special command was received from the Holy Ghost to this effect: "Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them." In obedience to this injunction, "they laid their hands on Barnabas and Paul, and sent them away."

Now, let us distinctly understand what this laying on of hands implied. It was not an impartation to them of the Holy Spirit, for both of them had already received that heavenly gift; neither was it an ordination to the apostleship, for these brethren could not confer an office which they did not possess themselves; and Paul is very careful in all his letters to let it be known that he had not received his apostleship through any human agency. Still less was it an ordination of them to the common ministry of the Word, for they had both been exercising that ministry for a considerable time; but it was a formal designation of them to that which we now commonly denominate THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE. They were set apart by the brethren to the work of carrying the Gospel to other cities and to other lands; and the significance of the service was twofold. On the one hand, by accepting this commission, the brethren virtually placed themselves in the position of representatives of the Church; and on the other, by consenting to give this commission, the members of the Church in effect pledged themselves to sustain and encourage the missionaries in the arduous work on which they sent them forth. Hence this was not an ordination in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, but rather a special appointment of

these two noble men to a work on which they were to enter, not as a private and personal venture of their own, but as the accredited messengers of the Church.

They did not linger long on the threshold of their new undertaking, but as soon as possible after the interesting service at which they were set apart, Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by John Mark, set out on that expedition which is usually described as the FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY of our apostle.

Here, therefore, we shall meanwhile leave them, while we pause to glean a few ears of practical suggestion from this most interesting field.

Let us notice, then, in the first place, how earnest Christian living attracts the attention and compels the admiration of those who are still outside of the Church. At first, as I have supposed, the name "Christian" was given to the followers of the Lord in derision, much as the modern appellations, Lollard, Puritan, Methodist, and the like, have been thrown at men of earnest spiritual convictions in the history of English Protestantism. It said much for the aggressive character of their religion and the activity of their exertions, that a nickname of any sort was thought necessary for them. But see how, by their conduct in succeeding years, they redeemed it from ridicule, and earned for it the respect even of their enemies. I presume not, indeed, to say that all who then bore this title were worthy of commendation; but simple justice will compel the investigator to declare that the great majority of them were distinguished for their truthfulness, integrity, and benevolence toward man, no less than for their devotion to Christ. They were not worse in the ordinary relationships of life because they were followers of Jesus; but contrariwise, their love to him made them better husbands and wives, better sons and daughters, better brothers and sisters, better neighbors and friends, better

citizens and servants, than those around them. And in the times when persecution raged most fiercely against them, even a Roman governor* had to confess that he could find none occasion against them, except it were in the matter of their God; while by the manner in which they met death—calling upon Jesus and, Stephen-like, praying for those who had condemned them to execution—they did much to extort from the spectators the admission that "the Christian is the highest style of man." In modern days, alas, we who profess to belong to Christ are very far from resembling him as thoroughly as we ought to do; yet we may not forget that the noblest epithet in our language, conferring as it does the highest honor, and securing the fullest confidence, is this of Christian.

How much better thus has it fared with this name, derived by outsiders from the word Christ, than with that of Jesuit, by which others have called themselves from the word Jesus. If you wish to stigmatize a man as cunning, deceitful, and untrustworthy, you call him jesuitical. Why? Because the members of the Society of Jesus, since almost the very time of its origin, have had the reputation of possessing these despicable features. Devoted heart and soul to the designs of their order, and believing thoroughly that the end sanctifies the means, they have deemed no disguise too degrading and no falsehood too great to be used by them in the attainment of their ends. Worming themselves into the secrets of families and the councils of cabinets, wearing the mask of servants while they were doing the work of spies, feigning the meekest humility while they were pushing on the proudest and most pernicious schemes—they have been hated even in Roman Catholic countries, and have made

* See the letter of the Younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, as given in "Pliny's Letters" in the series of ancient classics, pp. 152–154.

their name an offence to all lovers of truth and liberty and law.*

Thus the designation by which they chose to call themselves, and which they derived from Jesus, meaning it to be a symbol of the highest honor, has come to be hated and abhorred; while that by which the early disciples were styled by on-lookers, who derived it from Christ, has come to be regarded as the worthiest which a man can bear. Surely this contrast is not without its suggestive lesson. In each case the character of the wearers of the name has given to it its popular reputation; and if we would not have the title Christian become a reproach as great as it is now an honor, we who bear it must maintain a conversation worthy of the Gospel of the Lord. The first believers received it from others; we, however, have chosen it for ourselves, and it becomes us either to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the reputation which now it bears, or to renounce it altogether. Let us justify our appropriation of it by a piety as pure, an activity as aggressive, and a devotion to Christ as marked, as those by which Paul and his associates were distinguished. Like them, let us enthrone Christ in our hearts, and serve him in our lives. Like them, let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and cultivate the graces of meekness, truth, and righteousness. Like them, let us be filled with love to our fellow-men, and seek by every means to save them from destruction. Like them, let us be "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Then this ancient and "worthy name" by which we are called will acquire new honor from our conduct, and they who come after us will be stimulated by our example to carry it to still higher renown. Let us never forget that

* See this contrast more fully stated in "Paul the Preacher," by John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., pp. 47–49.

this appellation must be to us who bear it either our highest honor or our deepest disgrace. Our highest honor, if we are all that it really imports, but our deepest disgrace if we are not possessed of the character which it so vividly suggests.

Finally, we may see here how the foreign missionary enterprise was born. When Jesus left the earth, he said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" but they were somewhat slow to act upon his words. They were very earnest in Jerusalem and Judæa; but they organized no effort in the Jewish metropolis for the purpose of sending the Gospel to other lands. This was owing in some degree to the exigencies of their position, but more perhaps to the influence of their national exclusiveness. The ritual of Moses, while not preventing men of other races from becoming proselytes, did nothing to invite them; but rather built a wall around the chosen people, which served to isolate them even in the days of their dispersion from those among whom they were scattered. Now, the first disciples carried with them into the Christian Church much of that spirit of separatism, and carefully guarded every avenue through which Gentiles might come into their fellowship. This is apparent from their procedure in regard to the preaching of Philip in Samaria, of Peter to Cornelius, and of the first evangelists in Antioch. To use a modern term, the Jerusalem Church was intensely "conservative;" and had its members been left to themselves, it does not appear that they would have taken any steps to send the Gospel into foreign parts. Hence that city never could have become the centre of a world-embracing Church. But so soon as Gentiles came into the ranks of the disciples without needing first to become Jewish proselytes, they took up, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the case of the outlying heathen. They

knew the degradation of the old idolatries, and the hollowness of the worn-out religions of the nations; for they had themselves come out of them. Therefore they were anxious for the salvation of their fellow-Gentiles, and were prepared to give prompt obedience to the command of the Holy Ghost; and I am confident that no day of more sacred joy had as yet dawned upon the Church of Antioch than that on which Barnabas and Paul were sent out to preach the Gospel in the cities of Cyprus. Here, then, was something new under the sun. Nothing like this had ever been done by the Jews. Throughout the many centuries of their history—if we except the typical and prophetic missions of Elisha and Jonah—no one had ever left their borders to turn the Gentiles to the faith of Jehovah. Nothing like this had ever been seen among the Greek and Roman heathens themselves. Never had one nation among them concerned itself—from anything more than curiosity—with the spiritual condition of another. Not till this vessel left the harbor of Seleucia, had there been any organized effort by any men for the purpose of conferring a new and beneficent religion upon those of another race than their own. And when these brethren did go forth, they went not with earthly weapons, or protected by the edict of emperor or governor, but carrying only the truth, and eager only to tell the wondrous story of redeeming love. It was an undertaking as heroic as it was novel; and it was at once the fruit of that grander mission on which the Lord himself had come from heaven to earth, and the evidence of its reality and power.

Let it be distinctly observed, too, that when the command of the Holy Ghost came to them, these Christians of Antioch did not say, "Are there not heathen enough in Antioch to preach to? Let us convert them first, and then it will be time to go to Cyprus." They simply did as they were told, and they prospered for so doing. In our churches of

to-day, however, there are many who have the strongest prejudices against foreign missions, and who are constantly reminding us of the unconverted at our own doors. Now, of course, I do not deny—alas ! who can deny ?—the existence of heathenism in our own land, and I would be the last even to attempt to discourage efforts for its evangelization ; but what I do say is that we must not wait until that is accomplished before we think of carrying the Gospel abroad. If that principle had been acted upon at the first, it is doubtful if any country but Palestine would ever have heard of Christ and his salvation. It is at least certain that, if the Church of Antioch had followed that plan, Europe would not have been blessed, as it ultimately was, by the labors of Paul. But the apostle and his coadjutors were wiser than our modern censors, for they went from place to place dropping the good seed of the Word, and leaving it to germinate while they advanced yet farther into the regions of idolatry and superstition. And if we were animated by a right spirit, we would follow their example ; for the reflex influence of success on the foreign field cannot but stimulate the work at home. If it be true that missionary effort in heathen lands is opposed to activity within our own borders, then we might suppose that before the revival of the foreign enterprise, at or about the beginning of the present century, there would be great enthusiasm for the conversion of the masses of our own population. Then there was nothing to divert the attention from domestic objects, or to divide the stream of liberality and effort ; and so of course all these would go in the direction of home missions. But what is the fact ? Do we find such great interest in the evangelization of the unconverted in our streets, as on this theory we have a right to look for ? On the contrary, there were in those days few Sunday-schools, no city missions, no Five Points' Houses of Industry, no Water Street Missions, no

Scripture Readers' Associations, no mission churches — in a word, none of those efforts which we now group under the phrase "home evangelization." All these were the reflex results of the very foreign enterprise which is now so jealously regarded by many among us; or rather, perhaps, we ought to say that the home and foreign efforts which began some ninety years ago were the twin-born children of a revived Christianity in the Church. These two fields of labor are not antagonistic. They are both to be cultivated by disciples of Jesus; and the very life of a church depends on its earnestness in both. The missionary enterprise is the safety-valve of the Church; and if you shut that down you may look out for an explosion. The joy, the peace, and the purity, whether of life or doctrine, of a church depend on its activity for Christ at home and abroad, and more abroad than at home; for, from the observation and experience of a ministry which has lasted now for more than a quarter of a century, I say, without any hesitation, that when interest in foreign missions is maintained in a church to the normal point, all other activities and agencies at home will go of themselves, and as things of course; while, if there be a lack of devotion to that noble enterprise, nothing else will be prosecuted with either enthusiasm or success. Wherefore, brethren beloved, when your sympathies, efforts, and offerings are asked for this great cause, let your minds go back to the day when Paul and Barnabas set out from Antioch; reckon up, if you can, all that the world has owed to the work which was then inaugurated, and respond accordingly.

V.

CYPRUS.

Acts xiii., 4–13.

WHEN the members of the Church at Antioch designated Paul and Barnabas for the work of inaugurating the missionary enterprise, they laid of their very best upon the altar of the Lord. They sent away these brethren not because they had not succeeded, or because they could be the most easily spared, but rather because they had been so conspicuously wise and energetic in the services which they had already rendered. Not without a consciousness of sacrifice did they give them up; and yet they were at the same time glad of an opportunity of showing their love to Jesus, and their interest in their fellow-men, even at such a cost to themselves. But this cheerful acquiescence was not all upon one side. Barnabas and Paul were as ready to be offered on "the sacrifice and service" of the brethren's faith as the brethren were to offer them. They gave no reluctant assent to the call which was addressed to them. They said nothing of desiring to stay where they were. They uttered no words of regret; and as on another memorable occasion, so on this it was true of our apostle that "he conferred not with flesh and blood." When William Burns was chosen by the English Presbyterian Synod, then in session at Sunderland, to be its first missionary to China, and was asked how soon he could set out, he replied, with prompt

decision, "To-morrow!"* So here Barnabas and Paul, holding themselves at the entire disposal of the Lord, gave instant obedience to his command. They recognized that they were called, as indeed they were, to higher honor—if, also, to greater danger—and they went forth rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to receive such a commission from their Lord.

Now this was as it always ought to be. When on the battle-field, a movement requiring the highest strategic skill and attended with unusual danger, is to be made, the general selects for its leader the most competent and courageous officer at his disposal, and he who is so chosen reckons that he has received a mark of distinction. But why should it be otherwise in that army whose conflicts are spiritual, and whose victories are beneficent? And if it be otherwise, can we hope for the highest success in our efforts for the conversion of the world? The Church will never rise to the true ideal of aggressive excellence until she is willing to give up her best men to the prosecution of the work of missions, and until they are willing to regard a call to such work as the highest honor that can be conferred upon them. The "marching orders" given in the Saviour's last command can never be a matter of indifference to those who are his disciples; and the field on which Paul won his imperishable laurels cannot be beneath the ambition of the greatest among the soldiers of the cross.

The two friends took with them John, surnamed Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, and the author of the second Gospel. He is styled in the narrative "their minister;" but it is impossible to determine with precision the kind of service which he was expected to render them. Some suppose that he was simply a personal attendant, as Elisha was upon

* "Memoir of the Rev. William C. Burns," p. 304.

Elijah, or Gehazi upon Elisha. Others believe that he was an assistant in their public duties—such as preaching and the administration of baptism. To me it seems probable that, as he was, in some sort, the precursor of Timothy, the ministry of Mark was of a spiritual rather than a personal kind, and that he was useful in bringing people into contact with his companions; in supplementing their public instructions by private conversations; and in helping on the organizing of churches in the different places which were visited.

These, then, were the first foreign missionaries. They left Antioch with no flourish of trumpets, but with the calm earnestness of thoughtful men, who knew that they were hazarding their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus, and who believed in the assurance of their ascended Lord: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." After a journey of about sixteen miles they came to Seleucia, which was the port of Antioch, and was situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, about five miles to the north of the mouth of the Orontes. There to this day may be seen traces of dock-works and engineering achievements which have not been surpassed in modern times. Howson, condensing the description of Colonel Chesney, says, "The position of the ancient flood-gates, and the passage through which the vessels were moved from the inner to the outer harbor, can be accurately marked. The very piers of the outer harbor are still to be seen under the water. The stones are of great size, some of them twenty feet long, five feet deep, and six feet wide; and they were fastened to each other with iron cramps. The masonry is still so good that not long since a Turkish pasha conceived the idea of clearing out and repairing the harbor."* We venerate that old haven in Hol-

* Conybeare and Howson, vol. i., p. 149.

land from which, commended to God by their beloved pastor, the Pilgrim Fathers set out in the *Mayflower* to lay the foundations of a new commonwealth, where they might secure "freedom to worship God;" but to the Gentile churches of every land this ancient harbor at Seleucia, whose stones are still so firmly clamped together, is a place yet more to be remembered, since from it went forth those two apostles and their youthful minister with this for their message and their motto: "Christ for all the world, and all the world for Christ."

From this port they sailed directly to the island of Cyprus. No reasons are assigned for their selection of this particular field; but they may have been influenced by the fact that it was the birthplace of Barnabas,* who would be familiar with the habits of the people, and would naturally be anxious for their evangelization. It is not to be forgotten, also, that some of those who had been instrumental in founding the Church in Antioch were natives of Cyprus,† and would therefore be pre-eminently interested in having the Gospel carried to their immediate kinsmen. Moreover, the island was easy of access from Seleucia, being, in fact, only a few hours' sail from the main-land. It is situated in the Mediterranean Sea, off the coast of Phœnicia and Cilicia, and is about one hundred and forty-eight miles in length, by about forty in breadth. It has been identified through Citium, one of its ancient cities, with the Chittim of the Old Testament,‡ and it was originally peopled by settlers from Phœnicia; but to the descendants of these were added a mixture of colonists from different parts of Greece. Its name is derived from a plant§ which grows in abun-

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* Acts iv., 36. † Acts xi., 20.

‡ Cesnola, "Cyprus: its Ancient Cities, Tombs, and Temples," p. 2.

§ Henna—in Greek, *κύπρος*; in Hebrew, kopher.

dance within its borders, and which in ancient times was made to produce a variety of oils and salves; but, as Cesnola tells us, its chief source of wealth was its copper-mines, which yielded both a finer quality and a larger supply of that metal than any other mines known to the ancients. In fact, from its connection with this island, that mineral came to be called Æs Cyprium, which, being shortened into Cyprum, has been anglicized into copper. Of these mines Herod the Great long enjoyed a monopoly, keeping half of the proceeds to himself, and taking charge of the other half for Augustus; and that fact may help to explain how it came that there were so many Jews in the cities of Cyprus.*

The missionaries landed first at Salamis, which lies on the eastern coast of the island a little to the north of the modern city of Famagusta. It had a good harbor, and though the seat of government had been transferred from it to Paphos, it was still an important mercantile town. Howson describes it as being in the apostle's days "a large city by the sea-shore," and Cesnola, in his recent interesting book on Cyprus, speaks of it in these terms: "At present it is nearly covered by sand drifted from the sea-shore, where it lies to a depth of some ten feet. The harbor and that portion of the wall fronting the sea are still easily traced. I measured the length of the wall, and found it 6850 feet."† Here they found Jews in such abundance that there were more synagogues than one, and to them first they preached the word of God, but with what results the historian does not inform us.

From Salamis they journeyed across the island to Paphos, which stood near its western extremity. The city thus named was that known as New Paphos, and was about six miles to

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* See Lewin, vol. i., p. 120; Josephus, "Ant.," xvi., pp. 4, 5; Cesnola, p. 7.

† Cesnola, p. 202.

the north-west of the more ancient town. It still exists under the modernized appellation of Baffa. In the time of the apostle it was the head-quarters of the worship of Venus, or Aphrodite. Here, according to Greek mythology, that goddess arose from the sea-foam; and here was erected one of the most splendid of her temples. Almost every classic poet has sung of her as the Paphian Venus; but it would be a mistake to suppose that her worship here was in alliance with Grecian art. On the contrary, imported as it had been from the East rather than the West, it was revolting and debasing in its coarseness. The road between Old and New Paphos was often crowded with gay and profligate processions; strangers came constantly to visit the shrine, and even Titus, on his way to prosecute the Jewish war, made a pilgrimage to the temple of the goddess. Cesnola has graphically described the influence of this abominable idolatry when he says, "To a great extent it decided the character of public and private morality throughout the island, and that the result was highly disgraceful may be seen from numerous passages in the ancient writers. Every one knows the description which Herodotus gives of the custom of Babylonian women at the Temple of Mylitta, the Assyrian counterpart of Aphrodite, and he adds that the same thing prevailed in Cyprus. Later writers entirely confirm what he says; and the pictures which they draw of the grand festivals to the goddess at Paphos leave little for the imagination of man to invent, one would think, in the way of gross indulgence."* Thus, as at Antioch, they had already confronted the worship of Apollo in its chosen seat; and as afterward at Ephesus they unfurled the banner of the cross under the shadow of Diana's temple, so here at Paphos they brought the Gospel to the very citadel of that goddess

* Cesnola, *ubi supra*, p. 8.

whose homage was synonymous with the most degraded and abominable vice. The negro servant advised his master, who was a minister, and who had received competing calls to different churches, to "go where there was most devil;" and that was precisely the principle on which these apostolic missionaries proceeded. Like the European general, whose tactics consisted in pouring mass after mass of troops on the centre of his enemy's position until he had broken that, and then left the victory to spread itself out to the extremities of the line, so the leaders of the Christian army struck at idolatry in its strongest holds; and when these were destroyed it was comparatively easy to vanquish it elsewhere.

At Paphos the missionaries came, in a somewhat remarkable way, into contact with the representative of the Roman Government, whose name was Sergius Paulus; and in describing him as "deputy," or, rather, as the word should be technically rendered, "proconsul," the minute accuracy of the sacred historian is admirably illustrated. Under the Empire there were two classes of foreign provinces, called respectively the imperial and the senatorial. The imperial were those which required a military force, and which, for that reason, the emperor kept in his own hands, because it was important to him at least that the entire army should always be under his personal control. The senatorial were those which were at peace, and so gave little trouble to their rulers. The governors of the imperial provinces were nominated by the emperor, and were called proprætors. The governors of the senatorial were annually elected by the senate, and were styled proconsuls. But if at any time disturbances broke out in a senatorial province, and it became necessary to place it under military rule, it was transferred to the emperor, and so it might happen that the same province was at one time under a proconsul, and at another un-

der a proprætor. Something like this occurred in the case of Cyprus. At first it was an imperial province governed by a proprætor; and so long as only that was known some did not hesitate to say that Luke was in error here in calling Sergius Paulus a "proconsul." But further inquiry has brought to light the fact that before the date of which the evangelist is speaking the emperor had given back Cyprus and Gallia Narbonensis to the Senate, and taken Dalmatia in exchange for them; and so the proper title of the governor of Cyprus just at this time was "proconsul." Contemporary records name two proconsuls in the reign of Claudius; and Lewin* engraves an ancient coin struck in the time of that emperor, which has on one side the head and name of Claudius, and on the other the inscription "of the Cypriotes" with the name Procus, and as his title the very Greek word here used by Luke. Thus the correctness of the evangelist's designation is confirmed; but within the last year General Cesnola has brought to light an inscription which seems to make mention of Sergius Paulus himself under the title of proconsul. It is much mutilated, and in some parts the meaning is uncertain; but it gives a date ΕΠΙ ΠΑΥΛΟΥ [ΑΝΘ]ΥΠΑΤΟΥ "in the proconsulship of Paulus;" and Cesnola says this is most probably the Sergius Paulus who is mentioned in The Acts of the Apostles, affirming that instances of the suppression of one of two names are not rare.†

It is interesting also to note that one Sergius Paulus is named twice by Pliny among the Latin authors to whom he was indebted for facts recorded in his "Natural History;" and as that writer mentions one or two remarkable things regarding Cyprus, we may conjecture that these were furnished to him by this proconsul, who may have occupied

* Vol. i., p. 125.

† Cesnola, as before, pp. 229, 425.

his leisure time when on the island in making notes of his observations, much as General Cesnola himself did when he represented America among its people.*

This governor is here described as a "prudent" man, or, as it might be better rendered, "a man of intelligence." But if that were really his character, one is disposed to ask how he came to allow such a man as Bar-jesus, the sorcerer and false prophet named in the narrative, to have any fellowship with him or influence over him. Yet a very slight acquaintance with the state of religious opinion at this time throughout the Roman Empire will enable us to explain the apparent anomaly. The great mass of the ignorant population were wedded to the existing idolatries; and a professed adherence to the old superstitions was given by many others for no better reason than that their vicious habits could be safely indulged under the cloak of devotion. But in reality very few educated men could be found who had any faith even in the simplest elements of natural religion; while amid the breaking up of the ancient systems, and the rejection of the elements of truth which they all in some degree contained, there was, as almost always happens in such cases, a new development of credulity, and a rich harvest was reaped by soothsayers and false prophets of every sort. Those who were dissatisfied with all that philosophy and the popular religion could offer for their spiritual wants were at the same time anxious to examine everything which offered itself as a new revelation from Heaven, and so were often led astray by cunning craftiness which was lying in wait for their deception. The city of Rome was overrun with Oriental sorcerers who made a living by pretending to foretell or to control the future; and

* See an interesting article in the *Contemporary Review* for May, 1878, by Bishop Lightfoot, on The Acts, illustrated by recent discoveries.

in every important centre of population there was a plentiful crop of similar impostors. From Syria, from Chaldæa, from Egypt, and from Phrygia these charlatans came; but the worst and most cunning of them all, because they had fallen from the only divine religion of antiquity, were the Jewish magicians, the more intellectual of whom obtained ascendency even with thoughtful men. Now, the presence of Bar-jesus at the court of Sergius may be thus accounted for. The consul had cast off the old beliefs, but he had not yet found anything better to take their place. His soul was in a state of blank bewilderment as he cried, "Who will show me any good?" The question, "What is truth?" was not in him, as it was in Pilate, the flippant inquiry of a scorner, but it was the sad and serious problem on which he was continually pondering, but for which he could find no adequate solution. In these circumstances he met with this Bar-jesus, who belonged to the same class as Sceva and his sons, whom Paul afterward* exposed at Ephesus, and who, with whatever errors and false pretences he might accompany his statements, might yet bring before him the great truths which were enshrined in the heart of Judaism, namely, the unity, spirituality, and omnipresence of God. For the good things which he learned at his lips the proconsul would be grateful; though we may well believe that he knew not what to make of the claims which Bar-jesus advanced, and which, through his knowledge of occult science, he professed to sustain by miracles. This, we suppose, was the state of matters with him when he heard of the preaching of Barnabas and Paul; and in the same spirit of inquiry which impelled him to listen to Bar-jesus, he sent for them, desiring to hear what they had to communicate, if by any means he might attain to certainty on religious subjects.

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* Acts xix., 13–16.

This procedure of his, however, was bitterly resented by the Magian.* He saw that his position and occupation would be gone if the new doctrines were accepted by his patron; and therefore he put forth all his efforts to counteract their teachers. The occasion was both solemn and important—like that on which Peter confronted Simon Magus —and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Paul, so that, in direct contradiction of the name Bar-jesus, a son of the Saviour, which he had chosen for himself, he calls the sorcerer a "child of the devil;" denounces him as "full of all subtilty and mischief;" stigmatizes him as an "enemy of all righteousness;" accuses him of "perverting the right ways of the Lord;" and declares that he should be "blind, not seeing the sun for a season." He had scarcely spoken when a mist and a darkness fell upon the deceiver, who went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand; and the effect was not merely to break the spell of his influence over the proconsul, but also to secure the faith of Paulus, "who was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

In connection with the account of this miracle there are some things which call for a little further elucidation. Thus we have here for the first time introduced into the narrative the name of Paul as the equivalent of Saul, which henceforth drops entirely out of use. Now we cannot help asking whether this change had any special connection with the events which we have just been describing. Some would answer that the apostle took the name Paul after Sergius Paulus, the first convert of any great position in society, whom he had been instrumental in making; but such an idea is ridiculously inconsistent with all that we know of the humility of Paul. Others, observing that from this

* That is the meaning of the Persian word Elymas, which is here employed.

point of the history onward Barnabas falls into the second place, and marking, also, that special mention is made of Paul's being "filled with the Holy Ghost," have supposed that this was the occasion of his first public manifestation as the apostle of the Gentiles. This critical juncture they believe to be indicated by his triumph over an apostate Jew, by the performance of his earliest miracle, and by the conversion of an official representative of Rome. Now, therefore, was the time for the introduction of his apostolic title; and so they conclude that was the reason why from this day forward he was always called Paul. But to me all such explanations seem to be too ingenious to be correct. The simplest view of the matter is that from the first Saul had two names—the one Hebrew in form and termination, and the other Roman; and that, as he was now for the first time moving in Gentile society, his Roman name is now for the first time employed. It was a common thing for Jews to take a second name assimilated to those current in the countries in which their lot was cast. Thus it had been with Joseph in Egypt, with Daniel and his three friends in Babylon, with Esther in Persia; and so in Tarsus it would be natural for a Jewish youth to have both a Jewish and a Gentile name. Indeed, in the very chapter part of which we have been considering to-night we have Simeon called Niger; and elsewhere we have John Mark, Joses Barnabas, Joseph Justus, Judas Barsabas, Silas Silvanus; and after the same analogy we have here "Saul, who also is called Paul."

Another thing calling for special remark in connection with the record of this miracle is the appearance of the phrase, "being filled with the Holy Ghost." This cannot be meant to imply that only now for the first time did Paul receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for we have already seen that he was endowed with that, immediately after his conversion, through the agency of Ananias; but it seems to me

to indicate that a peculiar inspiration prompted him, at the moment, to take the course which he adopted with Barjesus. Apart from that divine impulse we have no warrant to believe that any miracle would have been wrought in connection with his words; for there is a very perceptible difference in this respect between our Lord and his apostles. The Saviour's supernatural power was in his own will. He performed his miracles when, where, and how he pleased. His ability to do such works was not a delegated thing, but inherent in his own divine personality; but it was quite otherwise with his official representatives. They wrought only at his suggestion; and so the working of miracles by them was subservient not to their own pleasure, but to his wisdom. Paul could perform supernatural signs only when he was specially directed by the Holy Ghost to do so. He had not the prerogative of doing such things when he pleased. That would have been too great a thing to intrust to any fallible man, and the Lord kept it entirely in his own hands. While he was upon the earth, he exercised his own discretion as to working or refraining from working miracles in certain places; and after he had gone to glory, he still controlled the movements of his apostles in this regard by the Holy Ghost. So Paul and his brother apostles wrought these mighty deeds only when, as in the present instance, they were divinely directed to do so; and the occasions on which they were so directed were commonly such as constituted their miracles "signs" which were as much illustrations of the truth as confirmations of it. This will account for some otherwise perplexing things in the history of Paul. Thus he could heal the Governor of Malta of his disease, but he could not remove from himself that thorn in the flesh which so perplexed him; he had to leave Trophimus at Miletum sick;* and he could not shorten the

* 2 Tim. iv., 20.

long and dangerous illness of Epaphroditus.* So, again, though he could foretell that no one of his fellow-passengers in the ship would be drowned,† he could not forecast his own future, or discover how it would go with him in the matter of his appeal to Cæsar.‡ These things are difficult to explain, until, under the guidance of such phraseology as that which Luke has here employed, we recognize that the ability to work miracles was not a prerogative of Paul's own, to be exercised by him just as he pleased, but was held by him at the will of the Master himself, and used by him only on the impulse of the Holy Ghost, at such times and in such circumstances as divine wisdom determined to be appropriate. The early Christians were not permitted, if I may so express myself, to play with miracles; for such a power in undirected human hands might have proved like an edge-tool in the grasp of an infant, and might have been detrimental both to themselves and others; but they held this gift of supernatural power subject to the special guidance of the Master whose they were, and whom they served; and therefore their exercise of it was always salutary in its purpose and significant in its form.

It was particularly so in the present instance; for this was a miracle of rebuke, and it took a most suggestive shape. The wonderful works of the Lord Jesus were almost all beneficent. Only on two occasions did his supernal power go forth in judgment, and in both the bodies of men were spared; for the one was the drowning of the herd of swine, and the other was the blasting of the fig-tree. The miracles of the apostles, also, were in the main works of mercy; yet one sign of judgment was wrought by each of those two who were acknowledged as leaders among them. And it is not difficult to perceive the principle on

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* Phil. ii., 26, 27. † Acts xxvii., 22. ‡ Phil. ii., 23.

which these were performed, for the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira were designed to be a warning against hypocritical connection with the Church; and the blindness of Bar-jesus was meant to be a salutary caution to all those who set themselves up in rivalry against the truth or in antagonism to it. We must note also that this blindness was only "for a season;" and it may be that it became a means of spiritual illumination to him on whom it was inflicted. We cannot tell; and though, where Scripture is silent, we are forbidden to dogmatize, yet we are not compelled to despair of the after conversion of this hitherto misguided man.

For the rest, we cannot fail to be impressed with the symbolical nature of this miracle. This blindness was to Bar-jesus an emblem of his own spirit and work. As one has well said, "His moral sense was blunted; and in attempting to sway Sergius Paulus, it was the blind leading the blind, while he needed to be led himself. He might profess to work by the finger of God, but the heavy hand of God fell upon him, and its shadow extinguished his vision. His sin might be read in his judgment. His boast was of insight, but he was taught that he saw nothing."* Or perhaps the significance of this judgment may be found in its forecast of the doom of those who love the darkness rather than the light. Bar-jesus would not open his eyes to see the truth which Paul proclaimed, and God closed his vision to the objects round him—a type of the sealing up of the inner sight of those who perversely persist in resisting him who is "the light of the world." There is an account given in ancient Roman history of one who had been proscribed under the government of the Triumvirs, and who, to save his life, disguised himself by wearing a black patch over one eye. A good while after, when the danger was

* "Paul the Preacher," by John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., p. 62.

past, he took off the patch, but in vain, for the sight of the eye was gone.* Even so, if men stubbornly shut their hearts against God's truth, their consciences will become seared, their spirits will be hardened with insensibility, and the light that is in them will become darkness. This is the great law of the divine administration, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath;"† or, as the Lord has elsewhere expressed it, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."‡ Beloved brethren, be on your guard against this danger! See that you resist not the force of God's truth! Let not the god of this world blind your minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto you; for if you thus shut out the truth from you, there is nothing but perdition before you. While you have the light, walk in the light; for if you refuse to do so, the day will come when a mist and a darkness shall fall upon you, and you will vainly seek for one to lead you by the hand. Therefore "give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."§

We cannot tell how long "Paul and his company" remained in Paphos, or what determined them to choose Pamphylia and Pisidia as their next field of labor. Per-

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* See "Memoirs of Archbishop Whately," vol. ii., p. 46.

† Matt. xxv., 29. ‡ John ix., 39.

§ Jeremiah xiii., 16, 17.

haps, however, when they came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for their leaving Cyprus, their future destination might be settled by an apparently casual thing, such as the opportune sailing of a vessel for Perga.

The district of Pamphylia lay between Lycia and Cilicia along the shore of the Mediterranean, and was composed of the territory enclosed between the mountain range of Taurus and the sea. Perga, its capital, was situated on the river Cæstrus, about seven miles above its mouth, and was as near to Paphos at the western extremity of Cyprus as Seleucia was to Salamis at its eastern. A short sail, therefore, would suffice to take the brethren thither; and as they landed they would see, crowning the hill behind the city, the Temple of Diana, to whose worship the inhabitants were devoted. It does not appear, however, that the missionaries made any evangelistic efforts here on this their first visit. This may have been due either to the fact that, so far as appears, there was no Jewish synagogue in the place, or to the eagerness of the apostle to press forward into the inland region behind Mount Taurus; but it was more probably owing to the disappointment occasioned by the defection of John Mark, who at this point left the missionary band, and returned to Jerusalem; for Paul had an exceedingly sensitive temperament, and would be greatly disconcerted by Mark's desertion. It may seem ungenerous, indeed, to give such an explanation of his speedy departure from Perga, but the better acquainted we become with him, the more natural will this account of the matter appear; and, blame it as we may, we cannot wonder that, after Mark had gone from them, both he and Barnabas should hasten away from a city which the conduct of their companion had linked with a most unpleasant association.

But how shall we explain Mark's departure from them? Perhaps he had not entered on the work in the right spirit,

and so, having had a pleasant trip through his mother's native island, he withdrew from the dangers which he feared would beset them in Pamphylia and Pisidia. Perhaps, through his Jewish prejudices, he was not yet in full sympathy with the movement for the conversion of the Gentiles and their reception, without regard to the Mosaic law, into the Church. Perhaps he was displeased at the pre-eminence into which Paul had been advanced, and was jealous for the honor of his uncle, who had apparently been put into the second place; or perhaps he was a little homesick, and longed for a sight of the dear friends whom he had left in Jerusalem. Probably there was a mingling of all these in the motives by which he was actuated; and though his conduct may have been natural in a young man, it was cowardly in its character, and painful in its results. As we shall afterward learn, he came to see his error, and ultimately regained the full confidence of Paul; but not before his defection had been the occasion of the most painful episode in the life of our apostle, when the contention between him and Barnabas was so sharp "that they departed asunder one from the other."*

It is not well to anticipate events which must come up again for review; nevertheless, I cannot conclude to-night without addressing a few words of exhortation to young Christians, founded on this false step of Mark, and its after-results as I have just now briefly referred to them.

Let those who have entered the service of the Lord be on their guard against allowing any influence to damp their ardor or to cool their zeal. Having put their hands to the plough, let them beware of looking back. He who enlists into the army of Christ does so for life; and no personal pique or petty jealousy of others should move him to desert

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* Acts xv., 39.

his colors. Not even the comforts of his home or the fellowship of those of his own household ought to draw him from his allegiance to his commander. The Lord is the dwelling-place of his people, and in him they may have a home in any place; while in the brotherhood of believers they may have more than made up to them their loss of fireside communion with their kindred. The Master himself hath said, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."* And he who has any true faith in God's omnipresence can sing:

> "To me remains nor place nor time,
> My country is in every clime;
> I can be calm and free from care
> On any shore, since God is there."

But the defection of the young disciple, besides doing injury to himself, may, as in the instance before us, cause serious alienation between honored servants of Christ, and so give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. We are often told that old members of the Church may prove a stumbling-block to those who are entering on the Christian life, by their inconsistencies; but we do not hear young disciples warned as frequently as they ought to be, that their fickleness may create strife and contention between those who otherwise would have been true yoke-fellows in the Lord. Mark was the occasion of a quarrel between Paul and Barnabas; and in many a modern church the elders would be peaceful co-operators but for the vagaries of

* Mark x., 29, 30.

some young and unstable novice, who, being related to an influential Joses, becomes at once the occasion of unseemly partisanship. Now, in such controversies there are usually faults all round; but the first fault is always in the vacillation of the conceited youth, who should be emphatically told so, and should be warned to be steadfast for the future. Not for his own progress alone, therefore, but also for the peace and prosperity of the Church, it is indispensable that the convert should be unwavering in his perseverance. He ought to think of something else than his own comfort or convenience, or pre-eminence. He ought to remember that the quiet and harmonious working of the Church as a whole is far more important than he is; and, lest some Paul and Barnabas should be stirred into contention over him, he should learn patiently to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

But there is another side to this subject; and if there should be any one here who has made a stumble on the threshold of his spiritual life, let him not imagine that he is beyond recovery. As we shall afterward see, Mark found his way again to the front rank of the disciples, and regained his place in the confidence of Paul. So it may be with you. Why not then begin anew to-night? He who restored Peter will not cast out you. Think not that you have lost your only opportunity. You have another now; and though some may object to put you back at once into your old place as Paul did with Mark, do not interpret your Saviour through their conduct. He is better even than the best of his servants; and is it not written of him, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench?" Paul could not endure the fitful flame which Mark seemed to be emitting, and was for blowing it out altogether; but Jesus fanned it into a steady blaze. Paul could not bear the harsh note which came from Mark, and

was for breaking the bruised reed; but Jesus gently straightened it out again, so that there came from it the sweet music of his praise. Doubt not, therefore, his reception of you. Remember that the greatest of all sins you can commit is to despair of his grace. Take hold of his hand again to-night, and see how he will fulfil for you the promise that "he that is feeble shall be as David."

VI.

THE FIRST RECORDED SERMON OF PAUL.

Acts xiii., 14–52.

FROM Perga Paul and Barnabas journeyed up across the mountains, on to the high table-land which forms the interior of Asia Minor, and made their first missionary efforts in Antioch of Pisidia. Their way led through wild passes, in which, at times, Alpine torrents ran with foaming impetuosity; and as the whole region was infested with brigands, this may have been one of the occasions on which Paul was exposed to those "perils of rivers" and "perils of robbers" to which he has referred in one of his letters.* The city which now became the scene of his labors is to be carefully distinguished from its more illustrious namesake on the banks of the Orontes. It lay almost due North from Perga, and was nearly a hundred miles from the sea-shore. It was built on the southern slope of the ridge which formed the boundary between Phrygia and Pisidia, so that it was referred to sometimes as belonging to the one, and sometimes as forming part of the other. It was founded by Seleucus Nicator, and after it came under the Roman power it enjoyed the distinction of being, like Philippi, a Roman colony. Its population was composed, in its lowest stratum, of native Pisidians, who spoke in a *patois* of their own. Its middle class consisted of Greek settlers,

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* 2 Cor. xi., 26.

who retained their mother-tongue; and its upper stratum of Roman colonists, who used the Latin language. Besides these there were many Jews, who statedly met for worship in a synagogue of their own. About forty years ago its ruins were discovered by an English clergyman,* in the immediate neighborhood of the modern town of Yalobatch; and, judging from the fact that among them were found as many as twenty arches which seem to have formed part of an immense aqueduct, it must have been a place of considerable importance.

Here, following the plan which they invariably adopted, Paul and Barnabas addressed themselves first to the Jews. They probably had interviews with some of their fellow-countrymen during the ordinary days of the week, and explained to them the purpose of their mission and the nature of their message. This would create a curiosity to hear still further from them; and accordingly, when they appeared in the synagogue on the Sabbath, they were publicly called upon, after the reading of the law and the prophets, to explain their errand. In response to this request, Paul delivered the address of which a summary has been preserved for us by the sacred historian.

A little thing, somewhat characteristic of the apostle, has been brought to light by Bengel in connection with the relation of this discourse to the exercises by which it was preceded. The synagogue lessons, like those of the Episcopal Church among ourselves, were arranged to be read in stated order, one from the law and one from the prophets. Now, in the commencement of his address, Paul uses three Greek words, partly rare, and partly peculiar to the Scriptures.†

* Rev. Mr. Arundell, then chaplain at Smyrna; see Howson, vol. i., p. 182.

† These are ὕψωσεν, *exalted*; ἐτροποφόρησεν, *suffered their manners*; and κατεκληρονόμησεν, *divided by lot.*

Of these the first is found in Isaiah i., 2, and the second and third in Deuteronomy i., 31, 38. It happens, too, that these two chapters, the first of Deuteronomy and the first of Isaiah, are read to this day on the same Sabbath among the Jews; and therefore we may reasonably infer that both were read in the service on that Sabbath in Antioch; and that, just as he afterward took the inscription on the Athenian altar for the starting-point of his address on Mars' Hill, so here Paul commenced his discourse with a reference to the Scriptures which had only a few minutes before been brought before them as the lessons for the day.*

We have here the first reported sermon of our apostle; and as it has in it the germs of those methods of presenting and enforcing the truth which have given to all his doctrinal epistles their peculiarity and power, it will amply repay the most careful analysis.

The audience was composed of those who were Jews by birth and those who are styled "religious proselytes,"† and were addressed by Paul as "ye that fear God." These last were not formally connected with the Jewish Church. They were probably thoughtful Gentiles, who had renounced polytheism and idolatry, and who, though they did not submit themselves to the Mosaic ritual in everything, yet worshipped the one true God, joined in the services of the synagogue, and were commonly regarded by the Jews with a friendly feeling, though they were still viewed by them as Gentiles, with whom they could not eat. They had all the knowledge of the Jews without their narrowness, and among them generally were the first-fruits of the apostle's labors in Gentile lands.‡ Now, an audience composed of two such

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* See "Bengelii Gnomon," *in loc.* † Acts xiii., 43.

‡ Jacobs's "Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament," note on pp. 49, 50.

classes—one characterized by national exclusiveness, and the other by an eager longing for the truth and a determination to weigh with candor everything that would be said—was not the easiest to handle; yet, in the course which Paul pursued, we see how he has already determined to become "all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." He had that to say which, if abruptly uttered, would have roused all the bitterness of bigoted prejudice against him; and so he began in an easy, natural, and conciliatory manner, and led his hearers gradually up to the truth which he desired to put before them.

The discourse itself may be divided into four sections, which may be styled respectively historical, apologetical, doctrinal, and practical.

The historical section bears a considerable resemblance to the address of Stephen before the council at Jerusalem, and it is not improbable that the words of the protomartyr were fresh in the memory of the apostle while he spoke. Like his great forerunner, Paul sought to gain a hearing by referring first to those subjects in regard to which he and his Jewish kinsmen were agreed, while at the same time he so constructed his historical review as to make it subserve the purpose of argument. His summary is more brief and general than that of Stephen; because he was not put upon his defence, and was required only to give a clear and positive exposition of the truth which he had to communicate. Hence he could choose his own ground; and with the view of showing that the system of Moses never was intended to be God's final word to men, but was designed rather to be a halting-place on the way toward the full manifestation of God's purpose of mercy to mankind at large, he began with the election of the patriarchs, and came down through the Exodus, the settlement of the tribes in Canaan, and the rule of the Judges, until the setting up of the monarchy under

David, in whose family the hopes of the people were centred, as that from which the great deliverer was to arise. Thus from the very beginning there had been a gradual evolution in their history, working toward that which was to be its climax and culmination; but that evolution had been always under the guiding intelligence of their God. It was no accidental thing, nor even any survival of the fittest in a blind "struggle for existence;" but instead the result of the superintending wisdom of Jehovah; for the most cursory reader of this address cannot fail to note the prominence which Paul gives throughout this portion of his discourse to the sovereign agency of God. It was he who chose the fathers; it was he who brought the people out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness; it was he who destroyed before them the nations of Canaan, and divided their land to them by lot; it was he who gave them the judges; it was he who rejected the dynasty of Saul, and selected that of David; and equally it was he who from the seed of David had raised up unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus. Now, as in all the former instances the people's interest lay in accepting the appointment of Jehovah, so Paul argues that their safety in the present case also was to be secured by heartily receiving the Saviour whom he proclaimed. His appeal thus stated, or rather perhaps implied, was all the more powerful because he left these facts to speak for themselves, without seeking at this stage of his address to point the warning which they suggested, and because he as yet said nothing that could be construed into disparagement of that law which, alas! had now become to them almost as much a snare as the brazen serpent was to their fathers in the days of Hezekiah, when that monarch broke it in fragments, and called it "a piece of brass." He had dealt thus far only in statements which they could not controvert.

But when he spoke of Jesus as a Saviour out of the

House of David, the question must have started to their minds, "Does he mean to allege that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah?" and in connection with that there would be a desire to know what evidence he advanced in behalf of the claim which he made for the Nazarene.

To meet that, Paul proceeds to what I have called the apologetical portion of the address, and gives three distinct proofs of the genuineness of the Messiahship of Jesus. The first of these is derived from the testimony of John the Baptist, who, when the people would have been delighted to hail him as their deliverer, disclaimed the honor for himself, but pointed them to Jesus, and considered his own course fulfilled when he had introduced them to him.

The second is founded on the fact that by their very rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, they that dwelt at Jerusalem and their rulers were fulfilling the prophecies which went before concerning him. The historian here has not specified the predictions to which Paul referred; but doubtless they would include the following: "When they knew him not they realized the prediction, 'There is no form nor comeliness that we should desire him.' In their condemning him was verified the oracle, 'He was oppressed and he was afflicted.' Their placing of his cross between those of two thieves brought to pass that 'voice'—'and he was numbered with the transgressors.' When he was laid in Joseph's grave the divine declaration was confirmed, 'and he was with a rich man in his death.'"*

The third proof of the Messiahship of Jesus here advanced was his resurrection from the dead, whereby he was "declared to be the Son of God with power," and the prediction in the second Psalm, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," was accomplished. Nor was this

* "Paul the Preacher," by John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., p. 79.

raising of Jesus from the dead a mere temporary thing, like that of the widow's son by Elijah, or that of the Shunamite's child by Elisha, for they died again, and returned to corruption; but Jesus rose to be the abiding recipient of "the sacred promises once made sure to David."* He came forth from the grave to have fulfilled in him the prophecy made by Nathan to David, "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee, thy throne shall be established forever;" and so he is the king of a spiritual and enduring dominion which is to be universal. This statement the apostle fortifies by a reference to the words in the sixteenth Psalm, "Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption;" which could not be interpreted of David himself, since, after serving his generation by the will of God, he fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption; and which therefore must refer to his son and Lord whom God raised from the dead. Thus, by the testimony of the Baptist regarding him, by the fulfilment of prophecy in his rejection and crucifixion by the Jews, and by his resurrection from the dead, Paul proves that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah. And as in the former part of his address we are reminded of the words of Stephen, so in this we have vividly recalled to us those of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, which refer to the same Psalms of David, and draw the same inferences from them. That, however, does not in the least invalidate the independence of Paul, or imply that he borrowed from his brother apostle. It was natural that, in seeking to establish the same conclusion, they should use similar arguments, especially when they were reasoning with the same class of hearers; and we cannot help remarking that, if it had been his special vocation to preach to the Jews, Paul, as is clear

* So we understand the words *τὰ ὅσια Δαβὶδ τὰ πιστά.*

from this discourse, would have shown as much tact and judgment in performing that duty as did the apostle of the circumcision himself. For the rest, if we care to use our reference Bibles with diligence, we may find in this section of his address the outlines of some of those arguments which he has more fully elaborated in his letters.

But, advancing now to the doctrinal portion of this sermon, we come upon thoughts which are distinctively Pauline, and which, so far as we know, were here unfolded by him for the first time. In an earlier part of his discourse he had grouped the blessings of the Gospel of Christ under the one generic word "salvation;" but as he narrows in toward his conclusion he becomes more specific, and proclaims to his hearers through Christ "the forgiveness of sins." This indeed had been already done among the Jews, almost in the same terms, on many occasions by Peter; but now Paul proceeds to announce that doctrine with which his name will be forever associated, as he says "by him," or rather "in him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Thus even at this early date, before the circumcision controversy had arisen, we discover that he had attained to those views of the law of Moses on the one hand, and of the Gospel of Christ on the other, which he has so admirably expounded and enforced in his epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans.

The importance of the subject itself, and its bearing on the results which followed the delivery of this discourse, make it imperative that we should dwell at somewhat greater length upon the statement which he makes.

Here, then, is a new term introduced—"all that believe are *justified;*" and again, "ye could not be *justified* by the law of Moses." What meaning must we assign to this word? It is borrowed from the courts of law, and refers to the issue of a charge brought against one who is accused.

As the result of a trial, such a one is either justified or condemned; that is, he is treated either as an innocent man or as a guilty man. Observe, I have said "treated" as innocent or guilty. He may be really guilty, and yet, by some means or other, he may be brought in not guilty, so that the law discharges him as having nothing against him; or he may be really innocent, yet through the force of a suspicious chain of circumstantial evidence, or from the absence of some needed exculpatory testimony, he may be found guilty, so that he is treated as a malefactor. The sentence of the court does not simply in and of itself affect the man's moral character. It only declares that, as a matter of fact, the law has, or has not, unsatisfied claims against him. Thus, then, justification is the declaring that an accused person is right before the law;* and when we speak of the justification of a sinner by God, we mean that he is treated by God as one who is right before the law, and on whom, therefore, the law has no claim for punishment. It is more than mere forgiveness, for the forgiven one is in some sort dealt with as a sinner; but the justified one is treated as righteous. Of course, in the case of every sinner so justified, there is also a change of heart produced by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that these two things, justification and regeneration, which is the beginning of sanctification, always go together. They are, in fact, as inseparable as light and heat are in the rays of the sun; but they are two things notwithstanding, and it is essential to a clear apprehension of both that they be held as distinct.

* A curious illustration of an old forensic use of the word is furnished in Walter Scott's "Waverley," when Evan Maccombich says to the judge, pleading for his master, "that ony six o' the very best o' his clan will be willing to be *justified* in his stead." Here the term means "hanged;" a criminal being held to be set right with the law when he had suffered its penalty. See "Waverley Novels," vol. ii., p. 390.

Now, taking justification to mean God's treatment of the sinner as righteous, the question arises, on what ground is the sinner so treated? This is answered by Paul in the words before us, both negatively and positively. Negatively, he says, "Ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Here, however, it is needful to remove a slight ambiguity in the English version of the sentence in which these words occur. Paul does not mean to say, as a hasty reading of the verse here would almost lead us to believe, that the law of Moses could give justification from some things, but not from others, and that from these others they could find relief alone in Christ. The order of the words in the original makes it evident that what he did say was this: "By him, or in him, every one that believeth is justified from all things; an effect which the law is so far from being able to produce that it justifies from nothing." This is a truth which in the most impressive and unmistakable terms he has repeated over and over again in his epistles; and never more tersely than in his words to Peter, as reported in his letter to the Galatians, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."*

But you ask, how can it be proved that justification cannot come from the law? I answer, not because the law for its own purposes was not valuable, but because the operation of law, as such, can never be anything but condemnatory. As one has very clearly put it: "If the law has not been violated, then its operation is null and void; but in no case can its operation, if it operates, be other than that of death. All are responsible to God; none have discharged their responsibilities; therefore the law comes in as an agent of death, and consequently from the law, as law, there can be no hope of life."† This is not because it is a bad

* Gal. ii., 16.

† "The Witness of Paul to Christ," by Stanley Leathes, p. 82.

law, but simply because it is a law; for it is matter even of our own common experience that the law of the State is never called into operation by us unless it be to punish us for some violation of it; or to condemn those who have broken it by injuring us. We look to it for the infliction of its penalty upon offenders. It does not operate at all on those who keep it; but when it is broken then its arm is uplifted against those who have infringed it. This is the case with all law, whether human or divine, and the law given by Moses was no exception. That law found men sinners, and, so far as its own intrinsic efficacy was concerned, it left them sinners. Nay, its emphatic enforcement of moral rectitude in the Ten Commandments, which, though they are of permanent obligation, were yet incorporated in it, only made their guilt more manifest. They were verily guilty, and therefore the operation of the law, so far from justifying, condemned them.* But if all law in general, and the law of Moses in particular, could not justify the sinner, how can this blessing be obtained? The apostle replies in the positive part of this verse thus: "In him"—that is, in this man, this Jesus—"all that believe are justified from all things." This is a general statement which we are sure Paul would amplify for the instruction of his hearers; and, from the reasoning contained in his epistles, we are at no loss to determine the method which he would pursue, and the points which he would establish. Let me group round this text a few passages taken almost at random from four of his letters. To the Romans† he writes, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom

* Paul does not enter here on the question, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" as he does in his Epistle to the Galatians. But, to prevent misapprehension, we refer our readers to that passage (Gal. iii., 19–29), that they may see its educational value.

† Rom. iii., 24–26; v., 18, 19.

God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And again: "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." To the Corinthians* he speaks of Christ as "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" and again he writes, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So also to the Galatians† he affirms that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Now, from these quotations, and others which might be abundantly added to them, the following things seem to me very plainly deducible: namely, first, that God was willing to deal with the Lord Jesus Christ in the room of sinners; second, that the Lord Jesus was equally willing to be reckoned with for sinners; third, that in so reckoning with the Lord Jesus, God laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and treated him as if he had been, what he really was not, a sinner; fourth, that this reckoning with Christ for sinners so honored law that now God can, consistently with the rectitude of his administration, treat sinners as if they were, what they really are not, righteous; fifth, that in order to a sin-

* 1 Cor. i., 30; 2 Cor. v., 21. † Gal. iii., 13, 14.

ner's being so treated, he must be "in Christ;" that is, identified with him as a believer in him, and a consenting party to his acting on his behalf; and sixth, that the justification thus obtained by the believer in Christ is complete and from "all things." It would be quite possible to make a long excursus on each of these propositions, but I do not know that I could make them thereby any clearer in themselves, or any more apparently the legitimate inferences from the passages which I have just quoted, than the simple statement of them has done. I leave them, therefore, to stand out before you in all the baldness of this distinctness. Union to the law secures no justification; union to Christ secures justification from all things; and that union to Christ is itself secured by believing in him. This is the great doctrine which Luther called "the article of a standing or a falling church." It is the keystone of the arch of the Christian faith. May God help us both to understand its meaning and to make a right estimate of its importance!

After having presented to his hearers this great and fundamental principle of the Gospel of Christ, Paul concluded his discourse with a practical exhortation, which took the form of earnest warning. Perhaps he had seen on some faces an expression of cynicism or contempt, as if his words were regarded as too absurd to be worth any further attention; so, recalling the doom which had fallen from the lips of the Lord himself upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because they had not recognized their "day," and had rejected him, he solemnly set before them the danger which they incurred by depising the message which he brought. His warning was all the more effective because it was given in the shape of a quotation from an oracle of Habakkuk, which, as originally uttered, was a merciful but, alas! also a fruitless admonition that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Chaldeans unless its people returned unto the Lord.

Nothing, therefore, could well have been more appropriate than its application to the still more dreadful calamity which was even then impending over them and their fellow-countrymen for their rejection of Christ. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

The effects produced by this sermon were very striking. In the English version it is made to appear that there was a difference between the Jewish and Gentile portions of the audience, and that it was only after the departure of the former that the latter ventured to request that he should speak to them on the same subject on the following Sabbath. But the best Greek manuscripts read simply, "As they were going out of the synagogue they besought him;" and that harmonizes with the statement made immediately afterward that many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, touched by their eagerness, "persuaded them to continue in the grace of God;" that is, to remain in the belief that salvation is of grace, and not by the law.

It is not without a certain suggestive interest that we read the account of the breaking up of this congregation. There had been great attention to the preacher; and his earnestness had stimulated them all—some, perhaps, to animosity, but the larger number to inquiry. Nobody had remained indifferent; and now, as they move out into the street, instead of remarking on the dress of their fellow-worshippers, or criticising the accents and manner and awkwardness of the preacher, or commenting on the character of his style and the quality of his illustrations, they are all full of the subject which he had set before them. Much of this, no doubt, was due to the concentration of purpose in Paul,

which held him to the presentation of one great theme, and enabled him to keep himself in the background. Much of it is to be traced also to the startling novelty of the doctrine which he advanced; but still, not a little of it is to be attributed to the spirit of the hearers themselves. And if it be desirable, as it unquestionably is, that ministers in these days should imitate Paul alike in their choice of subjects and in their mode of handling them, it is no less to be wished for that our modern hearers should listen with attention and with candor; and, as they retire from the sanctuary, should engage their minds with the truths which have been set before them, rather than with the idiosyncrasies of the preacher, the characteristics of the audience as a whole, or the mere externals of music or of ritual. It is a healthy sign of a congregation when, as its members are leaving the house of God, there are marks of thoughtful earnestness upon their faces, and there is a desire in their hearts to hear yet more concerning the matters that have been submitted to them by their teacher.

In the case before us, some of the more eager followed Paul and Barnabas to their homes, and obtained from them a promise to preach the same things on the next Sabbath. When that day came the synagogue was crowded with hearers—"Almost the whole city came to hear the word of God." The large proportion of the assembly were Gentiles, and the very sight of them within their place of meeting so filled the Jews with envy that they vehemently interrupted Paul by contradictions and evil accusations. This, however, only intensified the boldness of the missionaries, who forthwith deliberately turned to the Gentiles, and devoted the remainder of their labors to them, justifying themselves by this declaration to the Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life,

lo, we turn to the Gentiles! For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." This announcement very naturally gladdened the Gentiles, many of whom glorified the word of the Lord and believed. But just as naturally it exasperated the Jews, who stirred up the proselytes, who were of high social position in the city, and raised a persecution against the preachers so formidable in its character that they departed from the city and went forth to Iconium, not at all disheartened, but "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

Throughout the discourse of this evening we have been engaged almost exclusively with doctrinal matters; and now I will detain you but a few moments longer while I seek to give emphasis to one or two practical inferences from the narrative portion of our theme.

We have here, then, in the first place, a fresh illustration of the effect which invariably follows the faithful preaching of the Gospel. "Some believed, and some believed not." It has always been so. The messenger of Christ is to some the savor of life unto life, and to others the savor of death unto death. His comfort is that his fidelity is always well pleasing unto God. But what shall be said of those who reject the word of salvation which he proclaims? They cannot be precisely as they were before they heard his message. When the offer of everlasting life has been once made to a man, his whole standing before God is altered. Formerly he was a sinner under condemnation. If he accept the glad tidings, and believe on him of whom they tell, then he is forgiven and renewed; but if he refuse to receive the Gospel, then he adds to all his other unforgiven iniquities this one more, that he has despised the grace of God. Nay more, he has, by his resistance to the truth, made his heart less sensitive than it was before; so that, if the offer

of salvation should be repeated to him, he is in a worse position for receiving it than he was at first. There are thus few things more hardening in their influence than the continued enjoyment of a faithful ministry, while the Gospel itself is rejected by the hearer. The habit of resistance is strengthened, and the man becomes accustomed to that which at the first deeply moved him; so that at length it seems to him "like a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Then comes the limit of God's forbearance. The man hath "judged himself unworthy of eternal life." The Lord turns to others, and leaves him to the destiny he has deserved. Let us beware, friends, lest we should repeat the folly of these Jews in Antioch; for in our modern times, though we may not think it, the regular attendants upon ordinances are those who are in greatest danger of falling after the same example of unbelief. The Gospel is to us now very much what the law of Moses was to them. We have been accustomed to it all our days, until we have come to take it for granted that there is no fear of us, just because we have had such privileges, and altogether irrespective of the question whether or not we have accepted Christ. Others who are hearing it for the first time are pressing into the kingdom on every hand, but we are prone to be content with hearing only; not thinking that hearing without doing is the very way to make our hearts at length impenetrable. Unwarned by the history of God's ancient people, we are, I fear, in danger of reproducing their guilt, and reprovoking their doom. We are busily discussing the question, "Are there few that be saved?" and forgetting that we must ourselves "strive to enter in at the strait gate" while it remains open for our admission. We are arguing and re-arguing about the possibility of a heathen's being saved without the Gospel, and neglecting to secure our own salvation through it. We are deeply interested in matters which

are to us as unimportant as the mint and cummin of the Pharisaic tithe; and when the preacher sets before us this great truth of salvation by free grace, and calls it justification by faith, we style it dogma, and say that we have outgrown all that, and that we do not want doctrine, but life. But these same manifestations in the Jews were the precursors of their rejection by God; and in yielding to such influences we are courting our own destruction. There is no value in that doctrine that does not issue in life. That we shall never deny: but there is no life of any value save in union with doctrine; and now is the time to give emphasis to that truth. The whole religious life—I had almost said, also, the whole political life—of the last three hundred years, in Europe and America, is the outgrowth of Luther's preaching of this old doctrine; and if we reject it or despise it, we are doing our best to cast reproach on him, and to bring back the system from which he emancipated us. Nay more, we are doing despite to Christ; and we are flinging contempt upon the grace of God. And shall not God punish for these things? Truly it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and Jerusalem in the day of judgment than for us, if we, with our privileges and light, shut our hearts against Jesus and his love, and ridicule the doctrine of his grace.

We have here, finally, an illustration of the triumph of the Gospel in the face of persecution. The Jews expelled Paul and Barnabas from their city, but they could not uproot the good seed which they had sown; and so we read that "The word of the Lord was published throughout all that region." The very enmity of their opponents made the wind that wafted the message of the apostles to the neighboring localities; and so their malice outwitted itself. But it is ever thus: God maketh the very wrath of man to praise him. The burning of Tyndale's Testaments at the cross of St. Paul's,

by order of the Bishop of London, gave the exiled translator the means of carrying on his work with still greater vigor; and next to the faithful labors of its own adherents, the Gospel has been most indebted for its progress to the blind antagonism of its adversaries. "Truth, like a torch, the more it's shook, it shines;" and the very fierceness of the storm only carries the arrowy seed on its downy wings to a kindlier and more fertile soil. After a revival, the next best thing for the progress of God's truth is a persecution. Are not these United States themselves a witness to the truth of my words? Was not the religious intolerance of the ruling powers in the Old Country the occasion of the founding of the New? Thus even persecution and injustice have unwittingly done the work of God; and, over and over again in history, the crucified one has risen from the grave to new and nobler life. The Atlantic mariner, any day, would sooner have a storm than a fog; and better far, in my judgment, than the misty vagueness of much of our modern theology would be the antagonism that should compel us to define what we mean, and reveal to us the dangers that may be just ahead, but are now enshrouded in the dull, damp vapor. A little antagonism now and then, depend upon it, is good not only for the conservation, but also for the diffusion of the truth; and when it comes, if it should come, let us not be dismayed.

VII.

ICONIUM, LYSTRA, DERBE.

ACTS xiv., 1–20.

FROM Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas proceeded eastward over the barren uplands of that region, and after a journey of some sixty miles* they arrived at Iconium. This city, now known as Konieh, lies in a spacious valley near the foot of Mount Taurus. Toward the east the plain stretches away to the horizon; but behind the city, on the west, it is hemmed in by a semicircle of snow-capped hills,† and in the centre there is a spacious lake, which adds to the beauty and fertility of the district. By some ancient writers Iconium is spoken of as connected with Phrygia, and by others it is ascribed to Lycaonia; but Lewin has made it abundantly clear that, from the time of Augustus till that of Pliny, it formed the capital of a distinct tetrarchy, which was composed of fourteen townships carved out of Lycaonia, where it borders on Galatia.‡ It lay on the route between the Syrian Antioch and Ephesus; and that fact may help to account somewhat for its importance. In later history it became famous as the capital of the sultans of the Seljukan Turks, and it is rich in remains of Moslem architecture; but it has few relics of Greek or

* Lewin, vol. i., p. 145; but Kitto, "Bible Illustrations," vol. viii., p. 312, calls it ninety-three miles.

† See Alexander's "Kitto's Cyclopædia," vol. ii., p. 359.

‡ Lewin, vol. i., p. 145.

Roman workmanship, save some inscribed stones and fragments of sculpture which have been built into the walls. Its population to-day is estimated at thirty thousand, and carpets, cotton, hides, and leather represent its manufactures and products. In the times of the apostles its residents would be composed of the representatives of the original inhabitants of the district; a number of Greeks lounging through the market-place looking for news, and ready for every sort of amusement; a few imperial officials, cold and stately in their pride; and a colony of industrious, money-loving, and money-making Jews.

These last had a synagogue, in which on Sabbath-days they gathered for worship; and in that sanctuary Paul and Barnabas made their first public appearance in the city. It was unhappily too true that, wherever they had gone, their kinsmen according to the flesh had become their persecutors; yet their hearts yearned for their conversion, and even if they had not been commanded to preach the Gospel to the Jew first, their own impulse would still have been to commence their labors among their Hebrew brethren. In the present case their efforts were not wholly fruitless; for "They *so* spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." These Greeks were doubtless proselytes to the faith of Israel from among the Gentile population of the city, who here, as in Antioch, were among the readiest to receive the Gospel which the missionaries proclaimed.

The conversion of so many of their hearers was due to the agency of the Holy Ghost, as all conversions are; yet we must not overlook the close connection which the inspired historian has here established between the method which the preachers followed, and the effects which resulted from their labors. "They *so* spake that multitudes believed." The adaptation of the instrumentality is, in its

own place, as important as the efficacy of the agency. The temper and edge of the blade have something to do with the dealing of the deadly stroke, as really as the strength of the warrior's arm has its function and office in the production of the same effect. It is, therefore, a mistake to suppose that the style and method of the preacher are of no importance, if only he speak with the power of the Holy Ghost. The truth rather is, that the Divine Spirit will indicate his presence and agency by setting the preacher to seek out acceptable words which shall be suited to the character, intelligence, and circumstances of his hearers. Some, indeed, would ridicule all careful premeditation on the part of the minister, and encourage him to rely entirely on the help of the Holy Ghost; but such a course, far from putting honor on the Spirit, is in reality to mock him as thoroughly as they mock God who pray to him for daily bread, and then expect him to give them food altogether irrespective of their own exertions. We need do no more than examine the discourses of Paul himself to perceive how admirably he always spoke to the occasion, varying his method with the capacity and position of his audience; and he who most closely follows that example, even though it may demand of him the deepest study of human nature, of general literature, and of the Word of God, will, in the end, be, by the blessing of the Spirit, the most successful in winning souls for Christ.

In the narrative which Luke has given us, we have no report of the sermons delivered by Paul and his companion at Iconium; but we may be sure that their great theme would be the person and work of Jesus Christ, viewed in connection with Old Testament types and prophecy, and regarded as the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. They would reason with the Jews out of their own Scriptures; they would assert the fact that Christ had risen from the dead, establishing that with credible evidence, and draw-

ing from it those inferences for doctrine and for life which we find in the epistles which were written at a later day; they would set forth Christ before the eyes of their hearers as evidently crucified among them; and then, having dwelt on the reality of his death, they would ascend to the climax of highest assurance by a path like that in the familiar words: "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." All these things they would speak of not as mere matters of historical curiosity, or of vague speculation, but as subjects in which both they and their hearers had a direct, immediate, and eternal interest; and therefore we cannot wonder that the effects were so marked.

But the very things which produced strong conviction in some awakened bitter antagonism in others. Your "innocent preachers," as one calls them, who deal in pointless platitudes, evoke neither attachment nor opposition; but the earnest man always stimulates others to earnestness, either of agreement or of enmity. Never yet has a great work been done for Jesus without the provocation of many adversaries; and when we read that multitudes believed, we are quite prepared to find that "The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." This was a different thing from open violence, though ultimately it would appear that these unscrupulous assailants were prepared even for that. At first, however, they contented themselves with prejudicing the minds of their Gentile fellow-citizens against the missionaries, and it may be, as Hackett* suggests, that they did so by insinuating that the preachers were dangerous men—as disloyal to the empire, because they spoke of Jesus as

* "Commentary on Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles," by Horatio B. Hackett, D.D., p. 227.

their king. But whatever may have been the means which these adversaries used, the fact that the characters of Paul and Barnabas were attacked, determined them to remain and live down all aspersions by their conduct. If they had been assailed at once with persecution, they would no doubt have left Iconium immediately; but when unjust suspicions regarding them were industriously fostered by their enemies, they resolved to face them out, and prove them false. They would allow no one to say that they fled from investigation, and so pleaded guilty to the charges which were made against them. Rather they became more bold as their antagonists became more bitter; and the course which they followed had the approval of the Lord, for he gave "testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

This last expression is noteworthy as serving to confirm the view which I have already advanced,* to the effect that the power of working miracles was not possessed by the apostles as a constant and abiding thing which they could exert at their own discretion—just as one uses the muscular force of his arms—but was exercised by them only at the suggestion of their Lord, and when he saw that supernatural works would be of service either in proving the divine authority of their message, or in illustrating the nature of the great salvation which it was their business to proclaim. But even when wrought thus at the command and under the discretion of the Lord, the miracles which were full of comfort to those who had accepted the Gospel, were both irritating and hardening in their influence on those who rejected it. Just as the mighty works of Moses, which gave the promise and the hope of emancipation to the enslaved Israelites only stiffened Pharaoh into a more defiant obstina-

* See *ante*, pp. 99–101.

cy, or as the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus, which drew his friends more closely round him, only intensified the hatred of the Jewish rulers, and hastened the crisis of the crucifixion, so in the instance before us the confirmation of Paul's preaching by signs and wonders polarized the two parties which had begun to form themselves, and accelerated the conflict that was inevitable between them. The preaching of the missionaries became the talk of the city, so that the inhabitants felt compelled to take sides; and if we may judge from the fact that those antagonistic to Paul and Barnabas could not venture to make an open attack upon them, but had to resort to conspiracy, we may conclude that the two opposing companies were nearly evenly balanced. But it was no part of the apostles' work to foster animosity between man and man, and therefore, when they learned that there was a purpose* formed by the Gentile proselytes and the Jews to stone them, they withdrew from Iconium, and went across a bleak and exposed country to "Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: and there they preached the Gospel."

The boundaries of Lycaonia were so different at different times that it is now impossible to define them accurately; but in general we may say that it had Cappadocia on the east, Galatia on the north, Pisidia on the west, and Cilicia on the south.† The country is a table-land, the soil of which is impregnated with salt, and there are several salt lakes in the district. The population, described by Plumptre‡ as "half shepherds and half robbers," were rude and impulsive. They could understand the Greek language

* The term ὁρμὴ in this passage must be explained of the mind, as a purpose or determination.

† Fairbairn's "Imperial Bible Dictionary," art. LYCAONIA.

‡ "St. Paul in Asia Minor," by Dr. Plumptre, p. 143.

when it was addressed to them; but they spoke to each other in a dialect of their own, which was not intelligible to strangers. They resembled those who lived ninety or a hundred years ago in the remoter parts of the Highlands of Scotland, and were strong in physical frame, harsh and guttural in speech, not over-particular about the observance of the rights of property, somewhat superstitious in their beliefs, and having that fervid temperament which is everywhere characteristic of the mountaineer. The sites of Lystra and Derbe cannot now be certainly identified; but it is supposed by those best acquainted with the region that they lay not far from the base of a remarkable mountain called Kara Dagh, or the Black Mountain;* and probably their ruins may be among those now called Bin-bir-Kilisseh, or the thousand and one churches. This part of Lycaonia did not belong to a proconsular province, but had been given by Caligula to Antiochus, King of Commagene;† and so our two missionaries were leaving behind them the imperial government, and the protection which almost everywhere else a Roman citizen received from the State. Here, too, they would miss the fellowship as well as the animosity of Jews. No mention is made of a synagogue either in Lystra or in Derbe; and the fact that Lois and Eunice, who lived in one or other of these towns, did not dare to bring up the young Timothy as one outwardly under the covenant of Abraham, is an incidental corroboration of the statement which we have made. So now for the first time the Gospel comes into direct and immediate contact and conflict with heathenism. And, having no other convenient place of

* A parallel to this name may be found in Craig-dhu, the black mountain near Laggan, Inverness-shire, Scotland. We are not philologists enough to say whether there is any other connection than that of similarity between the two, but they seem to us to have common radical letters.

† Plumptre, "St. Paul in Asia Minor," p. 144.

meeting, we may suppose that Paul and Barnabas took their station in the market-place or on the street, and proclaimed the glad tidings with which they were intrusted to the throng of listeners that gathered round them as they spoke.

On one such occasion there was, on the outskirts of the crowd, a poor cripple, lame from his birth, sitting, perhaps, at his accustomed begging-place, but forgetting his usual occupation in the eager interest which he felt in the speaker's words. It may be that at the moment Paul was dwelling on the mighty works performed by Jesus when he was upon the earth, and "went about doing good." Perhaps he was describing how he opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, how he healed the sick, and made the lame to walk, and raised the dead to life. We cannot tell; but, whatever he was saying, his words so thrilled the heart of the afflicted man that his whole soul stood in his eyes as he gazed upon the preacher. In this unspoken manner—illustrating very beautifully the meaning of that "looking unto Jesus" of which we so often hear—the desire of the man's heart became known to Paul, who, perceiving through the revelation of the Spirit that he had faith to be healed, "said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

The sight of this cure performed in a moment, on one whom they knew so well, produced a profound impression on the spectators. They were persuaded that no collusion between the parties was possible. They could not doubt the evidence of their own senses; therefore they believed that a supernatural work had been performed. But that conviction, grafting itself upon their heathen notions, produced a singular result; for they at once exclaimed, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," and they identified Barnabas, as having the more imposing presence, with Jupiter, and Paul, as being the chief speaker, with Mer-

cury. It thus appears that the effect of a miracle depends upon the degree of knowledge possessed by the beholder, as well as upon his moral disposition. A certain amount of intelligence is needed before one can rightly interpret such a work as that which God, at the word of Paul, performed on this lame man. A miracle is not an appeal to ignorance, but to knowledge; and an underlying faith of some sort is presupposed in those to whom it is addressed. As Bacon has said, "God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it."* They presuppose a belief in the personal existence of God, as proved, or at least attested, by his works. Therefore the effect of a miracle on an atheist will be nothing. We must begin farther back with him, and endeavor to bring him up through the intuitions of his own nature to the admission of that truth which is the great postulate of revelation, namely, that God is. But, just as the effect of a miracle on an atheist will be *nil*, so its influence on those who believe in gods many and lords many will be qualified and conditioned by their polytheism. Therefore we must look for the explanation of the words of these Lycaonians to the kind of religious belief which up till this time had been common among them. They had the idea that the gods, who were represented by their idols, sometimes came to earth, and dwelt among men under an assumed disguise. This belief is frequently expressed by classic authors. Thus Homer sings of the gods:

> "They, curious oft of mortal actions, deign
> In forms like these to roam the earth and main;"

and Ovid, in telling a mythological story, the scene of which was in this very region of Lycaonia, represents Jupiter as

* Bacon's "Essays, with Annotations by Archbishop Whately," p. 155.

saying, when rumors of human wickedness had reached him,

> "I will descend, said I,
> In hope to prove the loud complaints a lie.
> Disguised in human shape, I travelled round
> The world, and more than what I heard I found."

In like manner Jupiter and Mercury were often associated; and there is a legend which tells that these two deities visited a province of which Lycaonia was one of the districts:

> "Jove with Hermes came, but in disguise
> Of mortal men concealed their deities."*

Now, with such opinions deeply rooted among them, we can see that it was not wonderful that these rude people, at the sight of the miracle, did not ascend to the perception of the unity and supremacy of God, but supposed that Paul and Barnabas were the visible incarnations of Mercury and Jupiter. And when they had adopted that conclusion, it was just as natural, taking the stage of their religious development into consideration, that they should call upon the priest of Jupiter to bring forth oxen and garlands, for the purpose of offering sacrifices to those whom they regarded as gods. Indeed, in this view of the case, their conduct may well be a reproof to many among ourselves, even "to those who, admitting that God came down in man's nature, and laid aside the splendors of his Godhead, neglect or refuse to render to him the homage and service to which he is entitled. These unsophisticated heathens acted faithfully up to their light; but men with the Bible in their hands —the great portrait in which is God incarnate—are strangely indifferent to its lessons and untrue to themselves. That

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* See Lewin, vol. i., pp. 147, 148; also "Paul the Preacher," by John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., p. 123.

priest who 'would have done sacrifice with the people' is a 'swift witness' against such inconsistency."*

The exclamation of the people, as was natural in their excitement, was made in their vernacular dialect, which Paul and Barnabas did not understand; and therefore it was not until they saw the priest making preparations to offer sacrifice unto them that they fully comprehended the situation; but so soon as they perceived the true state of the case, they were filled with horror. They felt, as Plumptre† has very graphically put it, very much as Bishop Patteson might have felt if he had seen some Milanesians preparing to hold a cannibal feast in his honor—and, with a vehement agitation which showed itself, in Oriental fashion, in the rending of their garments, they ran in among the people, and sought to dissuade them from the fulfilment of their purpose. When quiet was so far restored that he could be heard and understood, Paul thus addressed the crowd: "Men of Lycaonia, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

With Jews Paul reasoned out of the Old Testament, for to its inspiration and authority both he and they professed to bow; but with heathens he began farther back, and took his stand on those intuitions, or first truths, which form God's earliest revelation to the human mind, and which are attested and confirmed by the works of nature and of prov-

* Eadie's "Paul the Preacher," pp. 124, 125.

† "St. Paul in Asia Minor," p. 146.

idence. It is interesting, too, to mark how in this address, struck out of him though it was by the urgency of the emergency that was upon him, we have the very same thoughts which he has expressed in more elaborate discourses and epistles — a fact which indicates that he was giving utterance to no hasty and ill-digested ideas, but rather speaking of things on which he had often and profoundly meditated. He calls the gods which the Lycaonians worshipped vain or empty; and in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he repeats this appellation with added emphasis, when he says, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world;"* while, in writing to the Thessalonians, he uses almost the precise words which he has here employed, reminding them how they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."† Again, in this address he affirms that "God in past generations permitted the Gentiles to walk in their own ways;" and we find that thought recurring in his speech to the Athenians, when he says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at,"‡ or rather "took no notice of;" moreover, in his letter to the Romans the same idea reappears, when he speaks of "the remission of sins that are past through," or in "the forbearance of God"§—that is, of sins committed under that which may be called the dispensation of God's forbearance. Once more, when he says to these excited idolaters that "God left not himself without a witness" among them, we are vividly reminded of his argument in the opening section of the Epistle to the Romans, when he says, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."‖ Thus, as we have already hinted,

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* 1 Cor. viii., 4. † 1 Thess. i., 9. ‡ Acts xvii., 30.
§ Rom. iii., 25. ‖ Rom. i., 20.

the opinions and arguments here employed were not the extempore utterances of one who gave them forth without thinking thoroughly round them; but they were the mature expressions of views with which he had been long familiar, and which the years of his ministry only chiselled into deeper distinctness as they passed.

But, leaving now these interesting coincidences between this brief discourse and some portions of his epistles, let us look at the points specially made in the expostulation addressed to these rude idolaters. The apostle begins by disclaiming all right to be worshipped. He says of himself and Barnabas, "We are men. We have the same flesh and blood and passions as yourselves. We equally with you need a sacrifice to be made for us; therefore, be not guilty of dishonoring the true God by worshipping us." There was thus nothing of the trimmer or the temporizer about Paul. Many would have been ready to say, "Let them alone, we know not what good may come out of all this yet; and if we cross their wishes, we may provoke their enmity." But our apostle would give no consideration to such suggestions as these. He could not permit the awful enormity of offering sacrifice to him, no matter what might be the result. How different his demeanor here from that of Herod, when, as the multitude shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man," he accepted the incense of their flattery, and thereby drew down upon himself the shrivelling touch of Jehovah's hand! Ah, would that all those who are deifying self among us, and not only accepting sacrifices from others but offering oblations to themselves, might realize the meaning of these words: "We are men!" The dignity of manhood might well keep us from the cringing sycophancy that worships human greatness; while the weakness and dependence of our nature ought to impel us to bow the knee to God.

But in connection with his disclaimer of worship, Paul asserts that there is one "living God," and affirms that the design of his preaching the Gospel was to turn men from idolatry to the service of that great and omnipotent Jehovah. It is to be observed that the apostle does not attempt, by any process of argument, to prove the existence and personality of God. He takes his stand upon the intuitions of the human soul, and affirms that GOD IS: sure of finding an assenting response in the heart of each of his hearers; and pointing in confirmation of his words to the physical universe by which they were surrounded, and those stated operations of nature by which they were supported. This is the only true philosophical method. The works of Paley and others, which bring out the evidences of design in the material world, have an undoubted and almost inestimable value, yet the force of the arguments which they present depends on the intuitive principle which is already in every man's soul, and which is not the result of any process of reasoning, but rather an immediate spiritual instinct, to the effect that there must be a first cause of all things. I know, indeed, that some modern philosophers of the positivist school attempt to stifle this human cry after the living God, by alleging that the scientific man must deal only with phenomena, and that he has nothing to do with the principle of causation; but to this the reply is easy; for though it may be true that *as scientific* he has to do only with the classification of appearances, yet it is no less true that *as man* he cannot help pressing on to inquire into causation. There is that in him which impels him to ask, "Who made all these?" and it is only by laying a violent arrest upon that impulse that he can forbear from seeking for an answer. Now we hold that the mere putting of this question by men as men, everywhere and always, is itself a proof that there is a Creator. There is something somewhere that attracts the needle, else it would not keep

so true in its pointing to the north; and there must be somewhere some primary and efficient personal cause of all the physical phenomena which we see, else the souls of men in all ages would not have cried so constantly, "Who made all these?" Thus, for the establishment of the personality of God, we appeal not to the Bible, but to the human soul itself; and the philosophic atheism, which is attempting once again to rear its head among us, can succeed only when it has smothered the irrepressible instinct of humanity itself.

Associated with this postulating of God's existence by Paul here, there is an implied assertion also of his unity; and the apostle affirms that one great reason for his preaching the Gospel was to turn men to him from the worship of such vain deities as those whom the people of Lystra served. God had now revealed himself to them in Christ, and therefore he would have them bow before him. Thus he seeks to correct the false by the teaching of the true, and prevents them from sacrificing to him and Barnabas, by telling them of one who was the only sin-offering for the guilt of men.

Just here, however, he anticipates the objection, "Why did God not reveal himself to men at a much earlier date?" and replies to it after this fashion: It is true that many centuries had been allowed to pass before Christ came to make God known to the human race; but that was all in furtherance of one great design. "God in times past left all nations to walk in their own ways." He made no miraculous interference to correct their errors. He left them to themselves because he wished to demonstrate their inability to find their way back to him without his aid; and so, if we may supplement the argument of the apostle here by his statement elsewhere,* it was only "after that, in the

* 1 Cor. i., 21.

wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God," that "it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching" of Christ crucified, "to save them that believe." But although he thus withheld from specially interfering with the course of things among the Gentile nations, it does not follow that he left himself without a witness among them, or that they were entirely excusable for their iniquity. They will not have the responsibility of those to whom a written revelation was made; but in the arrangement of the seasons, in the gift of the rain, and in the general conduct of that which we now call providence, he had given such indications of his existence and agency as might have sufficed to keep alive their faith in him if they had "liked to retain him in their knowledge." Thus Paul knew nothing of that modern idea which would make all things evolve themselves from a primordial germ, without any intelligent supervision of a presiding mind, and simply by the force of an inherent energy, into the cause of which it is no part of philosophy to investigate. That is a dark, dreary, and unsatisfactory creed, foreign to the deepest and holiest yearnings of the heart of man, and as I think of it I am almost disposed to join Wordsworth in his passionate outcry:

> "Great God! I'd rather be
> A pagan, suckled in a creed outworn,
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
> Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

But we need not sigh after that fashion. What we require is the devout Christian faith of Paul, who saw God's hand in all things, and could sing with the Psalmist, "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;" adding to it his own doxology, "Of

him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."* With such a faith, science becomes one of the most interesting side-chapels in the great cathedral of religion; without it, science is for me deprived of its truest greatness, and becomes only a utilitarian thing to be prosecuted for the profit which it brings.

This vehement protest of Paul prevented, though not without some difficulty, the intended sacrifice; and not long after there occurred one of those sudden revulsions of feeling which serve to show how foolish it is to put confidence in men. Certain Jews, filled with malice, followed Paul all the way from Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium to Lystra, and so succeeded in stirring up the populace against him, that they took him and dragged him out of the city and stoned him, and left him for dead. Unable to get rid of the fact that a miracle, or that which seemed to be a miracle, had been wrought by his instrumentality, they probably insinuated that it was performed by him through some coalition with the prince of darkness, and thus the superstition which had been so near to worshipping him was stirred up to attempt his destruction. In the great mercy of God, however, he revived, and the next day went to Derbe with Barnabas, who, as being the less prominent of the two, seems to have been almost entirely let alone.

We cannot close our historical review without reminding you that Timothy, then a youth and in his teens, was most probably a spectator of this attempt to murder Paul. In a subsequent chapter† we learn that his mother was already a Christian on Paul's third visit to Lystra. It is natural, therefore, to suppose that she was converted on his first visit, since his second‡ was made not so much to the city generally as to the believers who had been brought to Christ

* Psa. cxlv., 15, 16; Rom. xi., 36. † Acts xvi., 1. ‡ Acts xiv., 21.

by his former labors. If that was the case, then the young Timothy would be almost certainly present at this crisis in Paul's career; and this view is apparently confirmed by the fact that, in his second letter to Timothy,* Paul says to him, "Thou hast fully known persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Thus, as the great apostle was in a measure prepared for his future trials by his presence at the martyrdom of Stephen, so Timothy first learned what "hardness" must be "endured" by "a good soldier of Jesus Christ" from seeing Paul stoned at Lystra.

I have left myself but little time for practical application to-night, yet I cannot let you go without giving point to two inferences from this whole subject.

We may learn, then, in the first place, that if the heathen are "without excuse," inasmuch as God has not left himself without a witness among them, our guilt must be immensely greater if, with the Bible in our hands, we reject Christ and his salvation. They who have sinned without law shall be judged also without law; and those who have never had the Scriptures will not be condemned for disobeying them. They will be measured by the standard of natural religion, and condemned for not acting up to the light they had; but we will be judged by the standard of this Book, which we have had in our hands from our earliest years, and with the instructions of which we have long been familiar. It is an awful thing to have a Bible. Improved, indeed, it will be the means of leading us to glory; but despised, it will be the millstone round our neck to sink us deeper in perdition. You may buy a New Testament at the Bible House for five cents; yet it may be to you at last the most costly

* 2 Tim. iii. 11.

possession you ever had; for Michael Bruce was right when, shortly before his death, he wrote these lines in the fly-leaf of his copy of the Scriptures:

> "'Tis very vain in me to boast,
> How small a price this Bible cost;
> The day of judgment will make clear
> 'Twas very cheap or very dear."

We may learn, in the second place, the emptiness of every idol. Paul called Jupiter and Mercurius "these vanities;" but if he were living now, he would use similar words about the idols which are daily worshipped in New York. For everything which the heart prefers to God, that for which a man lives, and in which he finds his only joy, if it be other than God, is an idol, and is as hollow and unreal as the image before which the heathen bows. Is it wealth? That will not abide. Is it honor? That is deceitful and short-lived. Is it pleasure? That is a bubble which bursts in the hand that grasps it. Is it power? That is a mocker; for often the mightiest have been, like Samson, in the hands of the meanest. Think not, I beseech you, that the idolators of to-day are to be found only in India and Africa. There are hundreds, yea, thousands of them in this city. There may be many in this congregation; and they are all clinging to that which is "nothing in the world." They have their anchor out, and think they are safe; but alas! it has not grappled anything, and so, when the storm comes, they are at their wits' end! In time of peril, a man has nothing but his God; and if his god be nothing, woe's me for his fate! The day is coming, friends, when the terrible crisis of death and judgment will be upon each of us. Let us prepare for that now, by accepting as our God Jehovah-Jesus, who is all and in all, lest at length we be driven into the dark abyss shrieking as we go, "Ye have taken away my god, and what have I more?"

VIII.

CONFIRMING THE CHURCHES.

Acts xiv., 20–27.

AFTER the fury of the mob at Lystra had spent itself on Paul, and left him for dead outside of the city, we read that "as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city." This restoration might be miraculous, but in the absence of a distinct statement in the narrative to that effect, we are not warranted to say that there was anything supernatural in the case. The truth probably was that he had been stunned by a violent blow with a stone, and that, as no fatal injury had been received, he was able for exertion so soon as his consciousness returned. We may be at least quite sure that there was none of that counterfeiting of insensibility of which he has been accused by some German expositors. The next day, following the rule which the Saviour had laid down, he and Barnabas departed from Lystra and came to Derbe, a city which has not yet been identified by travellers, but which is supposed to have been a few miles east of Lystra. Here, as in the other towns which they visited, they preached the Gospel, and, as our version has it, "taught many," or, as it might be more exactly rendered, "made disciples of many." There is an important distinction between the two words in the apostolic commission, which have both been translated "teaching." "Go into all the world and teach all nations, * * * teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I

commanded you."* The former term, which is literally "make disciples of," refers to the conversion of men to Christ; the latter alludes to the instruction of those already numbered among the followers of Jesus. Now, in the present instance, as the Gospel had not before been preached in Derbe, it is clear that the meaning must be, as indeed that of the original word is, that they prevailed upon many to accept Christ as their Saviour and Teacher. Thus they had considerable success; and as there is here no mention of persecution, we may conclude that they were allowed to prosecute their work without molestation. It is worthy of remark, as bearing upon this point, that in writing to Timothy and referring to his tribulations at this stage of his history, Paul mentions Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra as the scenes of his perils, but says nothing whatever about Derbe; and this omission is pointed out by Paley in his "Horæ Paulinæ" as a striking illustration of his argument founded on the undesigned coincidences between The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul.†

At Derbe our apostle was in the immediate neighborhood of the famous pass, called the Cilician Gates, which leads down from the central highlands of Asia Minor to Tarsus. With great ease, therefore, he might have proceeded by that route to his native city, and taken ship thence to Seleucia, which was the port of Antioch, on the Orontes; but his thoughts were not then of his earthly home. Barnabas and he were greatly concerned for those who through their instrumentality had become interested in the Gospel, and had professed their faith in Jesus in the cities which they had already visited. Therefore, in spite of the dangers to which they had been formerly exposed, they resolved to retrace their steps through Lystra, Iconium, and the Pisidian An-

* Matt. xxviii., 19, 20.

† "Horæ Paulinæ," chap. xii., No. 5.

tioch. Nor need we be surprised at this determination, as if it had been either rash or inconsistent; for in at least one of these cities the uproar had been created by adversaries who came from a distance, and in all of them the violence of persecution had been too great to be of long duration. Besides, the design of the missionaries in returning to these places was not to renew their labors among the people as a whole, but rather to instruct and strengthen those who had been already converted. In this way their presence would not provoke such public antagonism as had been formerly awakened, while much good would result to the young disciples. That this was indeed the case, is evident from the record of the historian: "They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

Here are three things over which, as matters of interest and importance, we may profitably linger for a little.

First, the missionaries set themselves to establish the new converts in the faith; they "confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorted them to continue in the faith." These two clauses are intimately connected. The confirmation was sought through the exhortation; and the effect of the exhortation was that the disciples were confirmed. It is important to remember this, since in modern ecclesiastical phraseology the terms confirm and confirmation have come to be almost exclusively employed in a ritual sense. Thus, Johnson defines the word confirm, "To admit to the full privileges of a Christian, by the imposition of hands;" and Webster gives the following as one of the principal meanings of the same term: "To administer the rite practised in

Episcopal churches by which a baptized person is admitted, through the laying on of the hands of a bishop, to the full privileges of the Church." Now, whatever may be said, in general, in favor of having some special service for the admission to full communion of the baptized children of the Church—and I believe a great deal might be advanced in support of such a service—yet it must be apparent to the most cursory reader that the confirmation here was something very different from any mere ritual observance. It will be seen that the persons visited by Paul and Barnabas were already disciples, and as fully members of the Church when the missionaries came to them on this occasion as they were at the time of their departure; and it is yet further evident that there is no mention here of the laying on of hands. We do, indeed, find that form practised by the apostles; but it was restricted by them to the impartation of the miraculous endowments of the Holy Ghost, and to the designation or ordination of certain individuals to office. The confirmation here spoken of was not a form at all, but rather the impartation of instruction by which the souls of the believers were strengthened. Truth is the proper nutriment of the soul, and intelligence gives stability to piety; therefore, that they might establish these young converts in the faith, Paul and Barnabas led them up from the simpler elements of the Gospel to its more important doctrines. This was a perfectly natural, and at the same time a pre-eminently wise proceeding on the part of the apostles. These disciples had just come out of heathenism. They had as yet only a slight acquaintance with the truths of the Gospel. They had not received, indeed there was not yet in existence, any written gospel or epistle like those which now form the New Testament, by the study of which they might "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." They were, besides, surrounded by ad-

versaries who could both sneer at and argue against their new belief, and therefore it was of the greatest importance that they should be able "to give an answer to every man that asked them a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear." Our two evangelists knew from personal experience how severe such an ordeal was, and they did a particularly prudent thing when they sought to have these new disciples firmly grounded in the truth, through a correct knowledge of its meaning, a clear understanding of the evidence by which it was supported, and a constant obedience of the precepts which it enjoined. They wished to make them not only Christians, but also intelligent Christians; and we may be profitably instructed by their example. Conversion is of immense importance, is, indeed, essential, and we are far from seeking to underestimate its value even in the smallest degree; but it is not everything; and it would be a great mistake to leave young converts unguided or uninformed. The first aim of the minister, and all who are engaged in evangelistic work, should be the conversion of their hearers; but it would be perilous to rest in the apparent attainment of that, as if nothing else needed to be cared for. Our business with a soul is not ended when it is converted by God's grace. We have then to confirm it by teaching, and establish it by training. We must secure its progress, if we would not, after all, have to mourn over its backsliding. It is not enough that we stand at the wicket-gate, and hand men through as they enter on their journey to the celestial city; but we must also make up to them frequently in the course of their pilgrimage, and prepare them for the sights which they are to see and the enemies whom they are to encounter by the way. Leaving the first principles of the oracles of God, we must seek to carry them on toward perfection; for in the Christian character and life it is pre-eminently true that where

growth ceases decay begins. Now all this is to be secured, not by pompous ritualism in worship, or brief rose-water sermonettes in the pulpit, but by solid, substantial, and systematic instruction out of this Book. This is the second great aim of the Christian minister; and in the proportion in which it is neglected by those who occupy the pulpit, or slighted by those who occupy the pews, the life and strength will depart out of our churches.

But a second object which Paul and Barnabas had before them, in their conferences with these young disciples, was to prepare them for the endurance of hardship and opposition. They said unto them "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God;" that is, that the heavenly home of the saints is to be reached only through conflict and trial. For the "kingdom of God" here is evidently the kingdom of glory, and not, as in many other passages it must be understood, the entire spiritual system founded by Christ on earth, and including both believers here and the redeemed in Paradise. These believers had already entered into the kingdom in the latter sense, and therefore the natural interpretation of the phrase here is that which restricts it to the heavenly land. Paul and Barnabas were already familiar with the great law that, as Messiah himself had been made perfect through suffering, and had obtained his throne as the reward of his tribulation, so, in their measure, his people must pass through trial into triumph. It has been true in all ages, that "they that will live godly must suffer persecution;" but that was especially the case in the experience of the primitive Christians. Jewish intolerance had already sought to eradicate them from the earth, and ere long Roman arrogance would clamor for their destruction. Therefore, that these converts might be prepared for the ordeal before them, the apostles fairly and honestly forewarned them of the dangers which were to be encountered

by them. Dealing frankly with them, they set fully before them both sides of the account. While describing the glory and blessedness of heaven, they did not keep out of view the hardships of the way to it. While speaking in glowing terms of the conqueror's crown that was in store for each of them, they did not make light of the battle through which it was to be won. They did not display the Eshcol cluster of the promised land, without saying a word of the Anakim who had to be met and overcome before that inheritance could be theirs. They told not only the truth, but all the truth, in the case. They did not hide the tribulation under an attempt to describe the happiness of the redeemed; but neither did they suffer the hardship of the journey to overlay the glory of that "city of habitation" which awaited them at last. They told them to expect trial, and therefore they would not be taken by surprise when it actually came. It is much to be out of Egypt, and emancipated from its bondage; but that is not of itself an entrance into Canaan. Commonly, indeed, there is a long interval between the two, and that interval is mainly filled with conflict. We have to do battle with the idolatries, the murmurings, and the mutinies of our own evil hearts. We have to contend with evil men and seducers around us, who, like Amalek and Moab and Bashan, are set for our destruction. Therefore, we must be on our guard. Antagonism and hardship will come, for the white-robed throng around the throne are "they who have come out of great tribulation."

But then there is a kingdom at the end; and by that "hope set before them" Paul seeks here to animate the Christians of Lycaonia. This was, indeed, a favorite consolation with the apostle. It was very precious to his own soul, and therefore he took great delight in administering it to others. Thus he says elsewhere, "I reckon that the

sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."* When he was contemplating his own death at the hand of the Roman executioner, he solaced himself with the assurance that the Lord would give him "a crown of righteousness;" and in every time of trial we are privileged to take to ourselves the same precious consolation. After the pain will come the peace; after the conflict will come the throne; after the cross will come the crown; after the long, rough voyage will come the welcome into the haven of heaven, and

> "When the shore is won at last,
> Who will count the billows past?"

Amid the bitterness of trial, let us anticipate the joys of the better country, and then we shall say with Bunyan, "The bitter comes before the sweet, and that doth make the sweet the sweeter." "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."†

Moreover, we must not forget that there is divine support available for the Christian while he is under tribulation; for we read that the apostles commended these Christians "to the Lord in whom they believed." Even if there were no help at our command, it would still be our duty, nay, our interest, in consideration of the paramount importance of the

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* Rom. viii., 18; 2 Cor. iv., 17; 2 Tim. ii., 11, 12.

† 1 Peter iv., 12, 13.

life that is to come, to endure patiently everything that comes upon us for Jesus' sake. But we may have, for the asking, grace sufficient for us, and strength perfected in weakness; and Paul taught this lesson most efficiently to his Lycaonian disciples by leading them with him to the mercy-seat. Tribulation cannot hurt us when we bear it prayerfully; and our conflict must end in victory when we fight upon our knees. When Israel, led on by Joshua, encountered Amalek in Rephidim, Moses went up to the top of the rock and stretched forth his hands in prayer on their behalf, so that Amalek was discomfited. And when we shall fight against our spiritual adversaries with the courage of Joshua, and supplicate God's grace with the earnestness of Moses, the issue will not be doubtful.

> "Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

Paul taught these converts to pray for themselves, by praying with them and for them; and it is not less our privilege than it is our duty, to remember at God's throne those young disciples who have recently come to a knowledge of the truth. Their strength as well as our own is in God; and with his spirit in our hearts, we shall all be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

But a third important object which Barnabas and Paul had in view in revisiting these cities, was to complete among the disciples in each of them the organization of a Christian Church. "When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord." It is not good for believers themselves to stand in isolation. There is such virtue in union that it gives the stability of the whole to each of its members. And so for the steadfastness of the individual it is important that he should come into fellowship with others. More-

over, the organization of a visible society was indispensable to the perpetuation of the influence of Christ upon the earth. One may be a Christian without connecting himself with the external society called the Church; but if you will analyze the matter carefully, you will discover that he has been somehow indebted to the Church for his knowledge of the Gospel, and that it is only through the organization of such a society that the truth of the Gospel has been preserved for all these centuries in the world. But a society needs order; and there can be no order without some kind of office-bearers. Hence in the early Church we find mention of elders. Indeed, a church was considered by our apostle to be incomplete if it had not these officials; for when Titus was left by him in Crete to ordain elders in every city, he was commissioned to "set in order the things that are wanting."* Now, as this is the first time we have come upon the mention of this office, we may take the opportunity of setting before you a brief summary of all that the New Testament contains in regard to the position and duties of those who held it.

In each Jewish synagogue there was a board of elders, presided over by the ruler of the synagogue; and perhaps the idea of having a similar organization in the Christian Church was, under the providence of the Holy Spirit, suggested by that circumstance to the first disciples at Jerusalem, from whom it spread wherever the Gospel was proclaimed. But, however we may account for the adoption of such a system, the following things seem to me to be very clear from a careful, and I trust also a candid, investigation of the New Testament on this matter:

First, one and the same class of office-bearers is denoted by the two words, elders and bishops. The term presbyter

* Titus i., 5.

or elder, in its etymological sense, had reference to the age of the person usually selected for the office; for, as the multitude of years is commonly associated with wisdom, a man tolerably advanced in life would commonly be chosen for a position which needed prudence. The term episcopos or bishop, again, in its literal sense of overseer, had reference to the duties which were required of those who held the office; but both words belong to the same order of office-bearers, and are used in the New Testament interchangeably. Thus Paul sent for the elders of the Church of Ephesus to Miletus, and when they came he said, "Take heed to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,"* or bishops. Peter, exhorting "elders," says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," †or bishoping it. And Paul, after specifying to Titus the kind of persons who should be chosen as elders, proceeds to give his reasons for naming certain qualifications thus: "For a bishop must be blameless."‡ I need not dwell on this, for it is now universally admitted that, in the New Testament use of the words, presbyters and bishops refer to the same order of office-bearers.

Second, there was a plurality of elders in every church. This fact is established by one of the verses before us tonight, in which it is said, "they ordained elders in every church;" by the statement that Paul "sent for the elders of the church"§ at Ephesus; and by the salutation of the epistle of the Church at Philippi,‖ in which the apostle addresses the bishops and deacons both in the plural. There does not appear to have been any case in which there was only one elder in a church.

Third, it seems that there were some of those elders who

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* Acts xx., 17–28. † 1 Peter v., 2. ‡ Titus i., 7.
§ Acts xx., 17. ‖ Phil. i., 1.

only ruled, and others of them who both taught and ruled. This, I think, is a legitimate inference from the words, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine."* Evidently in these words two sorts of elders are spoken of; but whether the distinction between them was, like that in the Presbyterian Church, a matter of designation from the first, or whether they were all alike ordained to the one office, and then, as an after-agreement of preference and arrangement among themselves, each took the department for which he was best adapted — some shrinking from public speaking, and others readily accepting the appointment to it—we cannot now determine; though, in my own opinion, the latter is the more probable alternative. The rule which they were to exercise was not so much that of authority as of influence. It was moral rather than legal. They were to feed or shepherd the flock of God, not "as being lords over God's heritage," but as "being ensamples to the flock."† But their brethren were to "obey them that had the rule over them, and submit themselves, because they watched for their souls as they that must give account."‡

Fourth, these elders, while chosen by the members of the church, were appointed or ordained by the apostles or evangelists. In the narrative which has been to-night before us, you observe that, in connection with the appointment of these elders, there was that which in our version is called "ordaining;"§ and then there were fasting and prayer. The ordinary reader, indeed, is apt to suppose that these were not so much two different things, as two departments of one service. But the word here rendered "ordained" is that which is used to signify voting in a public assembly by the uplifted

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* 1 Tim. v., 17.
† 1 Peter v., 3.
‡ Heb. xiii., 17.
§ Acts xiv., 23.

hand.* The same term is employed by Paul in 2 Cor. viii., 19, and has been translated there by the words "who was chosen." And, taking it in the same sense here, we get this version: "having chosen by vote elders in every church." That was the election. The fasting and prayer constituted the ordination, though there is here no mention of the laying on of hands. Dean Alford, one of the most unbiassed of expositors on all questions of Church polity, puts the gist of the whole clause into these words: "The apostles ordained the presbyters whom the churches elected." From the consideration of all the circumstances, our conclusion is that Paul and Barnabas recommended the churches to choose their office-bearers, superintended the election itself, and then by prayer and fasting set apart to their office those who had been chosen by the free suffrages of their brethren.

Thus, as in the case of the deacons, the right of the Christian people to the choice of their own office-bearers was distinctly recognized, and all attempts to diminish or destroy that sacred enfranchisement by any influence whatever, whether that of civil enactment or that of ecclesiastical courts, are out of sympathy with the spirit of the apostles, and with the essentially popular constitution which they gave to the churches which they planted at the first. No doubt this liberty has its inconveniences; but these are small in comparison with the evils which are entailed by its infringement; and it is dearly bartered for any worldly advantages. "The Church of Christ," as Ebenezer Erskine said in that sermon which was the occasion of the first secession from the Scottish Establishment, "is the freest society in the world," and out of it have come in the directest manner the civil liberties in which we rejoice.

* Robinson, *s. v.*, defines it thus: "To stretch out the hand, to hold up the hand as in voting; hence, to vote;" and he would translate it in this place by the words "to appoint by vote."

I have not gone into these details regarding primitive ecclesiastical polity in the interests of any one denomination above another; for I do not believe that any church presently in existence among us conforms in every respect to apostolic usage; and if we were to attempt to bring others up in some favorite particular of ours to this ancient form, we might discover that in certain other respects, deemed by many most important, we are ourselves deficient. But my purpose, in this comprehensive summary of the place and functions of the New Testament elder, has been to show you that the two poles of ecclesiastical organization are these: liberty and order. However we may differ from each other in minor matters, I take it that no church has any claim to stand on a Scriptural foundation which does not secure both of these. The order must not be enforced by the destruction of the liberty; but neither must the liberty be maintained by the sacrifice of the order. These are in ecclesiastical affairs what the centripetal and centrifugal forces are in the solar system; and the Church, by whatever name it calls itself, which moves in the orbit where these two forces are in equipoise, neither one infringing or impinging on the other, may fairly be said to be regulated by the principles which underlie the organization of the primitive Church, even although it has not precisely copied the details.

Having taken a loving and prayerful farewell of the brethren in each of these three inland cities, our two missionaries retraced their steps down through Pisidia to Perga, where they landed formerly from Cyprus, and whence Mark departed for Jerusalem. On the occasion of their first visit they did not, so far as appears, stay to preach at all; but now they followed their usual custom, and proclaimed "the glad tidings" to all who would listen to their words. Nothing, however, is said as to their success.

From Perga they pushed on to Attalia, the seaport on the Gulf of Pamphylia, which drew to itself the commerce both of Syria and Egypt. Here they took ship, and after a brief voyage they completed their first missionary circuit by returning through Seleucia to Antioch, in Syria, "from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

Immediately on their arrival at Antioch they gathered the members of the Church together, and gave a detailed report of their proceedings, telling their story in such a way as to keep themselves in the background, and give all the glory to God; for "they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Admirable humility! Let us imitate their example in our individual spheres, and seek evermore the spirit which would say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and thy truth's sake."

I cannot conclude without pausing for a few moments over the record of this FIRST MISSIONARY MEETING. What an interest there is for us in these days in this simple narrative! But our delight in the history, great as it is, may not be compared with the enthusiasm which the presence of Paul and Barnabas would evoke at that assembly of the Church. We may be sure that every member would be in his place that day. Even as, years ago, the eloquence of Duff held thousands on both sides of the Atlantic bound as by a spell, and men listened in the Old Country to Williams and Moffat, and in America to Judson and his noble compeers, so it would be then at Antioch. With what intense attention would they follow Paul, as he told of confronting Elymas at Paphos, and of his preaching in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia! And how tearfully would they listen to his recital of his maltreatment by the men of Lystra; while, as the

great success which had followed the labors of Barnabas and himself was set before them, they would break forth into one long, loud anthem of praise to Him who had given such testimony to the word of his grace, and had opened such "a door of faith unto the Gentiles." It was the birth-hour in them of a new joy. Now for the first time they became partakers of the gladness of those celestial ones, who rejoice over "one sinner that repenteth." Now they learned the meaning of the Saviour's words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It was a new experience, and filled them for the time with ecstasy. Let us hope, however, that it did not die down among them so rapidly as I fear it has done among ourselves. Audiences can be obtained for almost any adventurer who chooses to visit our shores; and even Christian families will turn out in crowds to be amused by some professional manufacturer of mirth; but when a simple-minded missionary, who has been laboring for years to elevate and Christianize the heathen, is announced to preach, there is "a beggarly array of empty benches." Something of this, perhaps, may be due to the fact that many of these brethren, when they come among us, set themselves to the discussion of abstract questions, instead of "rehearsing all that God has done with them." But more of it is owing to our lack of interest in the glorious cause with which they are identified; for we do not seem to care much for missionary intelligence, no matter how it is presented. Our *Missionary Heralds* lie unread amid the piles of periodicals that accumulate upon our tables; our missionary meetings are too generally counted the driest of all our services; and there are few among us who could give any very intelligent account of the condition of the missionary enterprise in any single field, not to speak of the world at large. Brethren, these things ought not so to be! The annals of history contain nothing grander, as a manifestation of heroic self

sacrifice, than the deeds of our modern missionaries. Their journals read almost like a continuation of this book of The Acts of the Apostles; and their success in many lands is one of the most striking illustrations of the power of the Gospel, and a much-needed counteractive to the materialistic unbelief that is seeking to make disciples among us. There is no more honorable roll of names than that which has upon it those of Buchanan and Carey, Judson and Martyn, Mills and Morison, Burns and Patteson, Williams and Moffat; and when, some years ago, the last named of these —the father-in-law of Livingstone—after fifty years of service in Caffreland, giving the ordination charge to his son, said, "I am homesick for Africa, I want to go back and labor for my beloved Caffres," I do not wonder that the audience was moved with an interest that was "too deep for tears." Who does not feel himself reproved by such an utterance from such a man? Brethren, let us shake off our indifference in this department of the Master's work! Let us keep our ears open for tidings from our missionaries! Let us sustain them by our gifts and by our prayers; and when they come back among us to tell us what God has done through them, let us hear no more the depreciating whisper, as they ascend the pulpit, "It's only a missionary;" but let us give them ovations more enthusiastic than those which greet the warrior, for they are "men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Think not that, in speaking thus, I am forgetting the urgency of home. I know that there are heathen in our own city as ignorant and degraded as those anywhere else. They need our efforts too; and on the evening of Thanksgiving-day I counted it my privilege to go to the Water-street Mission and do what I could, by my sympathy and assistance, to strengthen the hands of those who are laboring there. That is a noble work; and God there also is

giving testimony to the word of his grace by the conversion of sinners. But this ought we to do, and not to leave the other undone; and he who is most earnestly interested in the one will be most indefatigable also in helping on the other. We are no true disciples of Christ if we fail to do our utmost for both.

IX.

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM.

ACTS xv., 1–29; GAL. ii., 1–10.

SOME time after the return of Paul and Barnabas from their first missionary circuit, and while they were laboring earnestly at Antioch, certain Jews who professed to believe in the Lord Jesus came from Jerusalem to that city, and proved the occasion of the first serious controversy in the Christian Church by insisting on the circumcision of the Gentile converts as a thing essential to their salvation.

Rightly to understand the merits of the question at issue, and the importance of the principles involved, we must look a little closely at the ground taken by each of the parties. The Church at Jerusalem was composed almost entirely of Jews, who, with their faith in Christ, combined a conscientious observance of the law of Moses. The rite of circumcision had been enjoined on Abraham, in connection with his reception of the promise, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This injunction the Lord Jesus had nowhere expressly repealed. He had himself submitted to the law. He had chosen his apostles from among those who had been marked with the sign of the covenant; and no direct command had been issued to the effect that any should be admitted to the Church save through the gate of Judaism. No doubt Cornelius had been baptized by Peter, but that was after he had been authorized to administer the ordinance by a

heavenly vision; and it might be said that such a case was quite exceptional, and not to be regarded as a precedent except for occasions which were entirely parallel. The Judaizers, therefore, to use the most convenient name for them, were the conservative party in the early Church. They stood by the ancient ritual, and would have no change introduced without some divine and formal enactment. When, therefore, they heard what Paul and Barnabas had been doing at Antioch, they were greatly disturbed. It was not with them a matter only of national pride, though that might, and perhaps did, enter into their thoughts; but it was a thing of conscience. Believing that God required Christians to be circumcised, they stood for obedience to his command; and because they regarded Paul as violating the original condition of the covenant, they came down to Antioch to make investigation. They represented—incorrectly, as it came out afterward—that they had come from the apostle James; and in his Galatian letter, which, as we hold, refers to the same controversy and the same visit to Jerusalem as the history here,* Paul describes them as certain "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." We infer, therefore, that they did not at once openly and frankly state their views. They waited until, in an underhand and disingenuous manner, they had seen what was going on, and then, having obtained, as they thought, materials for an accusation against Paul and Barnabas, they came out with the assertion to the Gentile believers, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

This allegation naturally roused all the fervor of Paul,

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* For the reasons for our identification of the two visits in Acts xv. and Gal. ii., see note at the end of this discourse.

for he belonged to the party of progress; and while willing to give the past whatever importance was its due, he was more concerned to secure the interests of the future than to perpetuate the customs of the former economy. He saw that the question involved was virtually this: whether Christianity was for humanity or for a nation; whether the Gospel was for Jews, and only for Gentiles when they became Jews, or for men as men; whether salvation was by grace through faith to all and sundry, or through Christ and circumcision as being both equally indispensable. This, in his judgment, was fundamental; and so he grappled with his adversaries at once, and insisted on bringing the matter to an issue. Had these strangers made request that, in consideration of the feelings of the Jews and for the sake of peace and brotherhood, certain concessions should meanwhile be made by the Gentile believers, then he would have complied with their wish; for that was the course which he followed at a later day in the circumcision of Timothy,* and that was the principle which he enforced on the Corinthians and Romans concerning meat which had been offered to idols;† but when the demand was made on the ground that there could be no salvation unless it was complied with, he would "give place by subjection, no not for an hour," that the truth of the gospel might be maintained. This created no small dissension and disputation, and at length, by the appointment of the Church, fortified in Paul's case by a direct revelation to himself,‡ he and Barnabas were sent "to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question."

The result was a vindication of Paul, and the establishment of the principle that the sanction of God, as clearly

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* Acts xvi., 2. † 1 Cor. x., 14–33; Rom. xiv., 1–23.

‡ Gal. ii., 2. See note at the end of this lecture.

manifested by his Spirit and in his providence, may be taken by the Church as an indication of his will, even without any special divine injunction verbally communicated. No formal command of Christ was received by Christians requiring them to discontinue the observance of the rites of Moses; yet when the neglect of these rites was clearly seen to be approved by God in the ministrations of his servants, the Church wisely accepted that as an intimation of his will, and regulated her affairs accordingly. I am the more concerned to give definiteness to this aspect of the case, because it applies to other things than circumcision—being, indeed, a recognition of all development in the Church which is not inconsistent with or a corruption of its fundamental principles. The change of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first, may be indicated as an illustration of the class of particulars to which I refer.

It may seem singular that Paul, who in some of his letters stands so strongly on his own apostolic authority and independence, should have been willing to submit anything to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem; but in taking this course he was studying "the things that make for peace." It had been represented that these strangers had come from James; and the brotherly part was to inquire whether they were really authorized by the Church at Jerusalem to speak as they had done, and to consult whether some arrangement satisfactory to both parties, yet preserving intact the principles of the Gospel, could not be reached. On the question whether circumcision was essential to salvation, Paul would not have yielded even to an angel from heaven,* and that he would not submit to the decision of any man; but he had no scruple about coming to an understanding with Jewish believers as to how much was needed to satisfy their

* Gal. i., 8, 9.

consciences, and how far the Gentiles would be willing to go in that direction. On the matter of doctrine he was firm; on that of policy he was inclined to be accommodating; and it was the policy, not the doctrine, that he went to Jerusalem to settle.

When the delegates left Antioch, they were accompanied for some distance on their way by the members of the church, and at every place at which they halted on their journey through Phenice and Samaria they were received by brethren in Christ, whose hearts were gladdened by the news which they brought of the conversion of the Gentiles to the Lord. At Jerusalem they were welcomed in a manner worthy of their mission. First, according to the statement in the letter to the Galatians, there was a private interview between them and those who were of note in the church,* at which Paul explained his manner of presenting the Gospel to the Gentiles in a way so satisfactory that "the pillars"—as James, Peter, and John seem to have been called—recognized his apostolic position, and gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, asking nothing of them save that they should remember the poor. It was thus apparent that in doctrinal matters they were in fullest accord.

After this preliminary conference there was a public assembly of the apostles and elders, at which the deputies or commissioners from Antioch "declared all things that God had done with them." But here dissension began to show itself; for those of the disciples who had been Pharisees insisted "that it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Perhaps this demand of theirs was prompted, or at least intensified by the presence of Titus, a young Gentile convert whom Paul

* Gal. ii., 2.

and Barnabas had brought with them;* and from what is elsewhere said, it is likely that there was special reference to him throughout the discussion. But the demand to circumcise Titus was successfully resisted by Paul;† and after the delegates had an opportunity of stating the object of their mission, a second public assembly was called to consider the whole matter.

So far as I can make out from the condensed narrative before us, this meeting was, strictly speaking, composed of the apostles and elders; that is to say, these office-bearers formed the deliberative body, and the discussion was confined to them; but the debate was public in the presence of the brethren, or members of the church, or at least as many of them as could be accommodated in the place of assembly; and when the decision was arrived at, they were requested to indicate their concurrence in it, either by express vote, or, in modern phrase, by acclamation, so that the circular letter that was drawn up was written in the name of "the apostles, and elders, and brethren."

In the early part of the deliberations there would seem to have been much discussion, the importance of which was not at all in proportion to its earnestness. Perhaps it was then as it is now in synods, assemblies, councils, conventions, halls of legislation, and the like; and the debate was confined at first to the minor canons, whose artillery is always more remarkable for the loudness of its report than for the precision of its aim. Then, when the way had been cleared by their disappearance, the weightier men, whose judgment was mature, and whose character lent force to their words, set forth their views. It is at least certain that,

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* Gal. ii., 1, 3.

† The idea that Titus was circumcised has been adopted by Farrar, but seems to us to be utterly inconsistent with Paul's language, Gal. ii., 3.

"after much disputing," Peter spoke; and, according to his manner, went to the heart of the subject at once. He reminded his hearers of what had occurred at Cæsarea in the house of Cornelius, and how God there had put no difference between the Jewish and Gentile believers, giving both alike the Holy Ghost, and purifying the hearts of both alike by faith. He was clear, therefore, for laying no restrictions on the Gentiles from the law of Moses. That law was a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear; and if they had required to depend on their obedience to it for salvation, not one of them could have been saved. Their only hope, even as Jews, was in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; why, then, should they put upon the Gentiles that which would do them no good, but would only be a burden to them, unrelieved by any such historical associations as those which made it interesting and important to themselves? Thus he took his stand upon salvation by grace, and placed himself by the side of Barnabas and Paul.

After such a statement from the apostle of the circumcision, the assembly was all the better prepared to listen in a dispassionate spirit to the deputies from Antioch, both of whom now spoke, giving an account of their mission among the Gentiles, and dwelling particularly on the miracles by which God had endorsed their proceedings, as being specially likely to produce an impression on the minds of their hearers. When they ceased, James, who has been called—but for no reason that I can discover—the President of the Council, took the opportunity of declaring his opinion. He was, as is generally believed, a near kinsman of our Lord according to the flesh, and from his upright and holy life, had gained the surname of "The Just." He spoke, therefore, with the weight of character as well as of wisdom. He recognized the force of all that had been said by Peter, and

acknowledged that all which had been advanced by the delegates was in accordance with the nature of the Gospel, and with the plan of God, as revealed through Amos in a prediction which he quoted. Thus he, too, endorsed the principles for which Paul contended; but while conceding that the law of Moses should not be laid upon the Gentiles as a necessary thing, he recommended that, out of regard to the feelings of the Jews, who were to be found in greater or smaller numbers in all the churches, they should be asked to abstain "from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." His advice thus differed in some respects from Peter's; but inasmuch as it compromised no principle, while it conciliated the Jews by enjoining abstinence from those things which were peculiarly shocking to them, the assembly adopted it, and it was readily accepted by Paul and Barnabas.

In a matter of such importance, however, it would not do to leave the decision merely to the recollection of those who had been present. That might have led to misunderstanding, and so might have perpetuated the difficulty. Therefore, with exemplary wisdom, their judgment was put into the form of a circular letter to the churches; and then remembering that sometimes a written document, though ever so carefully worded, has a cold, stern aspect, they sent with it two of the prophets of the Church of Jerusalem—Judas and Silas, to wit—who might give such verbal accounts of the meeting as would enable the brethren to comprehend its meaning, while at the same time they would relieve Paul and Barnabas from the necessity of expounding a decision in reference to a controversy on one side of which they had themselves been prominent leaders.

Now, out of this first recorded ecclesiastical procedure certain important questions arise, to the consideration of which I invite your attention for a few minutes longer. As

we read this decree, we are impelled to ask whether we are to regard it as given by direct and immediate inspiration. This may appear to be settled by the use in it of the phrase, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us;" and if any one should prefer to adopt that view, I shall not enter into very earnest debate with him on the subject; but the following considerations lead me to a different conclusion. First, there was a keen and animated discussion in the assembly, all of which would have been unnecessary and out of place, if, after all, the matter was to be settled directly by the immediate authority of the Holy Ghost. Second, though James and Peter thoroughly agreed in principle, yet there was such a difference between the advice which they severally gave, as seems hardly compatible with the idea that they were both speaking under the immediate inspiration of the Divine Spirit. Third, the peculiar manner in which the words "and to us" are appended to the phrase "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost," rather indicates that the mind of the Spirit, in this instance, was revealed, not through the direct inspiration of any one member of the assembly, but by the general consent of all who were present. The question was decided "by the use of means accessible to men in general under the ordinary guidance of the Holy Spirit;" and it is possible that the words, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost," may refer not so much to the guidance of the Spirit, at the moment, as to the manifestation of his will, which was given in the case of Cornelius, and by the signs and wonders which he granted to be wrought by Paul at the very time when he was receiving the Gentiles into the fellowship of the Church. As Dr. Dick has said, "This ought not to be considered as a claim of inspiration, but as a simple assertion that the sentence was not expressive of their private opinion, but of the mind of the Spirit, which they had collected from Scripture, and from his recent dispensations to

the Gentiles."* And it is this aspect of the matter which makes the record before us a valuable precedent for every after-time; for if this controversy had been settled simply by inspirational authority, there would have been in such an arrangement no principles available for the guidance of the Church in the coming days when apostles and miraculous gifts should have entirely passed away. But if the decision was arrived at by Christian men in the exercise of a spirit of brotherly forbearance, and seeking by the use of appropriate means to discover the mind of the Spirit through his word and providence, then we have here an example which in all time of controversy we should seek prayerfully to follow. We cannot hope to compose differences between Christians or churches by some infallible arbiter; but we may heal them by the same love, forbearance, and earnest desire to do Christ's will, as animated the members of this early assembly.

Another question suggested at this stage has respect to the permanent obligation of this decree. Are we now placed under precisely the same restrictions as are here enumerated? or were these designed merely for the transitional age of the primitive Church, to facilitate the emergence of Christianity out of Judaism? Now, before we can rightly answer these inquiries, we must revert to the circumstances out of which

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* "Lectures on The Acts of the Apostles," by John Dick, D.D., p. 293. So also Dr. David King has said, "The question was one regarding which the Holy Ghost had already furnished grounds of judgment; and the apostles rested their case expressly on prior oracles and miraculous attestations." And again, "The sum of the whole is, that the Spirit of God allowed apostles and elders to defend truth already revealed and attested, by arguments drawn from Scripture and providence; and, for the benefit of the churches, eventually sealed by his sanction the just conclusions to which they came."—"The Presbyterian Form of Church Government," by David King, LL.D., pp. 280, 281.

the controversy arose, and to the special reason assigned by James for suggesting the compromise which was ultimately adopted. The whole difficulty had its origin in the presence of two conflicting elements in the Church. On the one hand were the Jews, who, from association, education, and conviction, were strict observers of the law of Moses. On the other were the Gentiles, who, from national prejudice, were apt to despise the Jews, and look with something like contempt upon their religious rites. Pharisaic exclusiveness provoked the retaliation of Gentile defiance; and James made his appeal to the Gentiles on the ground that so many Jews were in all the churches. He says, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day;" and it was the presence of those persons in the Church that rendered the observance of these restrictions necessary for the sake of peace. So soon as these circumstances changed, however, there would be no further need of such concessions. When the brethren who were then weak should have become strong enough to see that the Jewish ritual had been intended from the first to be merely temporary, or when the number of Jews in the Church should have become so small that their presence as a distinct party could not be recognized, then there would be no longer any need for this sacrifice of their liberty by the Gentiles. To me, therefore, this compromise reads like a special provision for a peculiar set of circumstances; and while the principles of mutual consideration and forbearance on which it is founded are binding on every age, the things which it enjoins are, in my judgment, matters of indifference, with the single exception of that one of them which is forbidden by one of the precepts of the Decalogue.

It is true, indeed, that the contrary opinion is maintained in the Greek Church, and is held by some estimable breth-

ren among ourselves. They argue, for the perpetual obligation of this decree, on two grounds: first, because the prohibition of blood as an article of food is not merely a Mosaic enactment, but dates as early as the time of Noah; and second, because in the decree there is forbidden an immoral thing which is always and everywhere a sin; so that it would seem that the eating of things strangled is as bad as the violation of the seventh commandment.

Now, in answer to the first of these objections, we admit that the passage in the ninth of Genesis is the strongest which the Bible contains, for the prohibition of blood as an article of food; but we must not forget that the Noachian dispensation was as distinctly preparatory and educational in its character as the Mosaic. There were things enjoined in them both which are not now recognized by us as binding. Notably among these was the rite of animal sacrifice; and in the existence of that we have the reason for the prohibition of blood. So long as the one lasted the other was in force. The shedding of blood in sacrifice acquired a new and sacred significance from the prohibition of blood as food; but when animal sacrifices were done away in Christ, all the restrictions associated with them disappeared. Then as to the other argument, founded on the mention in the decree of a positive sin, a simple and sufficient answer to that is furnished in the low state of public opinion among the Gentiles, in regard to that vice, at the time when this decision was promulgated. It was not reckoned by them as a sin at all, but was viewed by them as a thing in which they allowed themselves, but from which the Jews abstained, just as they abstained from certain articles of food. Nay, it had even connected itself with their heathen rites of worship, just as the eating of meat offered to idols had done. Thus it occupied among them at this time a place like that of the other things mentioned in the decree. Moreover, we are very

sure that our reprobation of that vice now is not at all derived from this ecclesiastical enactment, but rather from the moral law as interpreted, vivified, and glorified by the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, if we are to put all the things mentioned and forbidden here on a level with the violation of the seventh commandment, we are entitled to ask, where are the other nine precepts of the Decalogue? If this decree is to be the new law of the Christian Church for all time, and if these are the only things necessary to be observed by members of the Church, what becomes of the other branches of morality? He who reverences the moral law as such does not require this decree to keep him from impurity; but he who is kept from uncleanness solely out of regard for this enactment, has not yet acquired any thorough respect for the moral law. Now, these Gentile converts were precisely in this latter case. They had not yet fully learned what Christian morality was; and it was well to keep them from debasing sin, even on the low ground of an ecclesiastical decree, until they had become familiar with the purity which the Saviour enjoins. So soon, however, as they had mastered the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, this decree would be for them superseded; even as the go-cart is laid aside when the child has learned to walk alone. Thus the very fact that a positive sin is here included along with things in themselves indifferent, is a proof that this arrangement was meant to be only temporary.

I cannot pass from this point, however, without remarking that, as some Christian brethren regard the prohibition of blood and of things strangled as still binding, we are thereby furnished with an opportunity for acting on the principle of forbearance, of which this decree furnishes an illustration. It does not become us either to ridicule or despise them. They claim our respect, and are entitled to our affection.

A third question springing out of this history is whether the composition of this assembly throws any light upon the subject of church government. It has been commonly called the first council of the Church, but that is a misnomer; for, so far as appears from the narrative, only two churches were represented, and even the one of these had only two delegates present, whereas the other was there in full force of apostles, elders, and brethren. But a general council is composed of a certain definite proportion of representatives from all existing churches. The advocates of each form of church government have tried to find the germ of their own system in this primitive assembly; but, so far as I can discover, with no great success. Romanism can get nothing out of it; for the decree was not at all like a papal bull, and Peter, whom its votaries represent as the first pope, did not carry the council over to his views. Episcopacy can get nothing out of it, for very evidently this was not an assembly of bishops, presbyters, and laymen, sitting in two houses, and voting in two divisions, clerical and lay. Presbyterianism can get little out of it, for this was not a synod or a general assembly composed of representatives from all the churches. Nor can Congregationalism get much out of it, for here were apostles and elders of one church sitting in a body, and only two delegates from another church with them: so that this was very far from being a mutual council; and besides, elders were there, and they have disappeared from almost all Congregational churches. This was a reference by a mission church, through its delegates, to the mother church, of a question which had emerged in a heathen city, in consequence of the intrusive interference of certain members of the mother church in the affairs of the mission church. The two churches did not agree to lay the matter before the representatives of other churches whom they had mutually arranged to bring

together; but with the utmost confidence in the strength of their position, the members of the daughter church laid the whole question before the mother church, to which the offenders said they belonged. That is all; and, being all, there is not much there to indicate what the primitive church polity really was. What we are taught here is not so much to stickle for the divine right of any form of ecclesiastical government, as to be zealous for the divine rule of charity.

But now, finally, we are confronted with the question, what may we learn from this whole subject that may be of service in our modern church life? To this I answer, that for one thing we are taught to be on our guard against introducing division into churches which are zealously doing God's work. Never, surely, were men more intent on carrying forward the triumphs of the Gospel than these Christians at Antioch. Yet strangers from Jerusalem, more anxious about a matter of ritual observance than for spiritual progress, did not hesitate to interrupt their activity and introduce controversy among them by raising the question of circumcision. It was an unjustifiable, if not also a malicious, proceeding. Missionary work was for the time suspended; and Paul and Barnabas, who might have been earnestly laboring in some new field, were sent to Jerusalem, all because these Judaizers insisted on the essential importance of that which was really indifferent. But how often have similar things been done in our existing churches? A foolish question has been started by some one-ideaed enthusiast, who has pertinaciously kept it before the minds of the brethren, and those who should have presented an unbroken phalanx to the enemies of religion have turned their weapons against each other. A case of this kind occurred in the early history of the United Presbyterian Church at Kilmaurs, Scotland, over which my first settlement as a pastor

was; and as I thus became familiar with its details, I may use it here as an illustration in point. Its first minister, the Rev. David Smyton, after forty-two years in the pastorate, partly under the influence of a narrow spirit, partly also, perhaps, from the failing of his powers by old age, introduced an overture into the Synod to enjoin uniformity in the mode of observing the Lord's Supper. It seems that some ministers were in the habit of "lifting" the bread before they gave thanks, while others did not lift it until after they had given thanks, and he wished that all should be required to lift it first, as that was, in his judgment, essential to the observance of the ordinance. The Synod wisely decided to leave the matter to individual choice; but this did not satisfy the zealous old man, and, after troubling the brethren with it for some time, he withdrew from the denomination because he could no longer have connection with a church which would not insist on what he held to be a right observance of the Supper. The result was a division in the congregation itself, a lawsuit about the property, and the building of a new church by those who regarded the matter as non-essential. All that was very sad; but the fitting, if also somewhat grotesque, commentary on the whole affair is that, according to the tradition of certain old members of the church with whom I conversed, Mr. Smyton himself forgot to "lift" the bread before giving thanks on the first occasion of observing the Lord's Supper with his people as a separate body![*] We smile at such puerilities; and yet, though the history I have given is one of a hundred years ago, what better are the disputes to-day in the Church of England about "the eastern position?" what better the controversies about the communion wine, which have

* Full particulars of this singular case may be found in "Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church" (Scotland), pp. 401, 402.

split many congregations into two? what better the divisions about secret societies, psalmody, instrumental music, pulpit robes, and the like, which have kept apart those who else "like kindred drops had mingled into one." Friends, let us set our faces against all discussion upon such microscopic matters as have no essential importance. The progress of the Church as a whole is infinitely more to be considered than the airing of the pet crotchet of any individual, or even the advancement of that which we may reckon the best form of worship.

Nor does this lesson hold only in the intercourse between members of the same church or congregation. It is of force also in the dealings of denominations with each other. When, for example, a High-Church Anglican bishop goes out to the Hawaiian Islands, which were evangelized by the missionaries of the American Board, and seeks to divide the newly-formed Christian community by questions of apostolic succession, church government, and ritual, we cannot help being reminded of the doings of these early Judaizers. And when in some small Western town one good congregation, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Congregational, is enough for the place, and is doing a good work, what better is it for some other denomination to go in and seek to divide it into two or more weak churches, on the simple score of individual preference for a particular kind of service? We execrate the conduct of these Judaizers at Antioch, but let us take care lest we be found repeating it ourselves in America.

Another thing which we ought to learn from this history is, that our Christian liberty should be regulated by love. We may have a right to do many things which yet, in present circumstances, and out of regard to our brethren, we should not do. No doubt if our brethren should demand our abstinence from them as a thing essential to our salva-

tion, then we may resist, nay, for aught I can see, we must resist until at least they have conceded our right; but if, our liberty being admitted, the brethren should ask us, out of consideration either for themselves or for others, to forbear exercising it, then we ought to put love higher than liberty, and accede to their request. That is precisely where I stand, for example, in regard to the use of strong drink as a beverage. If one should insist that abstinence from it in every form and degree is essential to my soul's salvation, I think I should take it just to assert my liberty, or, at any rate, I should insist on my liberty being conceded; but if, that being fully recognized, I should be asked to forego it because of the good that my influence may exert on those who are in danger from it, or because of the scruples of certain brethren regarding it, then the principle of this ancient decree, and of Paul's argument in his letters to the Romans and Corinthians, comes in. I should still say, "All things are lawful for me;" but I would add, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." The exercise of liberty is conditioned by love; yet even the love must insist on the recognition of the liberty.

Finally, we may learn from this whole narrative to be very zealous for the free grace of the Gospel. Paul would not allow that anything was necessary to salvation but faith in Christ. Over and over again he contended for justification by faith without the deeds of law. That was to him the glory of the Gospel. That is its glory still; therefore, let us keep that sacred. It is not, "Be circumcised, and thou shalt be saved." It is not, "Be baptized," whether by an apostolic clergyman or by the form of immersion, "and thou shalt be saved." It is not, "Take the communion, and thou

shalt be saved." It is not, "Confess to a priest and receive absolution from him, and thou shalt be saved;" but, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." "The just shall live by faith." Well might the Christian poet sing,

> "Oh, how unlike the complex works of man
> Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!
> No meretricious graces to beguile,
> No clustering ornaments to clog the pile,
> From ostentation as from weakness free
> It stands like the cerulean arch we see
> Majestic in its own simplicity;
> Inscribed above the portal, from afar
> Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
> Legible only by the light they give,
> Stand the soul-quickening words, 'BELIEVE AND LIVE.'"

Note on the identity of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, mentioned Acts xv., 4, *with that referred to in Galatians* ii., 1.

In The Acts of the Apostles there is mention of five distinct visits made by Paul, after his conversion, to the city of Jerusalem; and presuming, as I think we may fairly do, that the visit referred to in the letter to the Galatians was one of these, the question arises, which of them was it? We may at once dismiss the first, fourth, and fifth from the account; the first, because it was only three years after his conversion; the fourth, because Barnabas did not accompany him on it; and the fifth, because it was at the beginning of his long imprisonment. It remains, therefore, that it must have been either the second, when Paul and Barnabas went up from Antioch with alms for the relief of the saints at Jerusalem (Acts xi., 30), or the third, when they went up to consult the apostles and elders in regard to circumcision. Some adopt the former of these alternatives; and certainly, if we had only the epistle to guide us, we should not have supposed that Paul had been at Jerusalem at all between the time of his first visit after his conversion, and of this when he went up (Gal. ii., 2) "by revelation." But, on the other hand, there is nothing in the epistle which obliges us to believe that Paul had never been at Jerusalem on any other occasion than the two which he has there

particularized; for his purpose there is to establish his independent apostolical authority, and therefore he is led to refer, not to his visits to Jerusalem as such, but only to those of them during which he came into personal fellowship with the other apostles. Now, when he and Barnabas went up with their alms, it does not appear that they met with any of the apostles, for they were all probably at that time absent from the city on account of the persecution of the Church by Herod (Acts xii., 1–25); therefore it was not needful, for the purposes of his argument in the epistle, that he should mention that visit at all.

It remains, therefore, that the visit in the epistle must be identified with that described in Acts xv. This harmonizes better than any other view with the best chronology of Paul's life; and besides, the occasions of the visits as described in The Acts and the epistle agree. "Both times," says Alford, "the important question relative to the obligation of Christians to the Mosaic law was discussed; both times the work of Paul and Barnabas was discussed, and what need was there for this to be twice done?"* To all this, however, Paley and others make the following objections: namely, that as described in the epistle, the journey was made by revelation, whereas, according to The Acts, it was the result of a determination of the Church at Antioch; that in the epistle Paul refers to a private conference with the chief apostles, saying nothing of any public assembly, while in the history only the public meeting is spoken of, and there is no hint of any private conference; and that in the epistle no mention is made of the decree of the assembly, though that might have been expected if the visits were the same. But to the first of these it may be replied, that the journey might be both by revelation and by appointment of the Church; since either the revelation might be given directly to the Church, or it might be given to Paul himself after the action of the Church, to remove any doubt which he might have as to the expediency of his going. To the second we may answer that, though the history contains no reference to any private interview between Paul and the apostles, yet the course which the public meeting took was such as to indicate that there had been some previous understanding between the parties, of a kind like that which a preliminary conference would establish. To the third, which makes so much account of the absence of all reference to the decree in the epistle, Paley has himself given a satisfactory reply when he says,† "The epistle urges the argument on principle, and it is not, perhaps, more to be wondered at that in such an argu-

* Alford's "Greek Testament," vol. ii., Prolegomena, pp. 26, 27.

† Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ," chap. vi., section 10.

ment Paul should not cite the apostolic decree, than it would be that in a discourse designed to prove the moral and religious duty of observing the Sabbath, the writer should not quote the 13th Canon." The history was designed to give that which was important for the Church, and therefore we have in it the decree; while nothing is said about the private conference. The epistle was intended for the Galatians, and was meant to show that Paul was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles; therefore, in it the account of the private conference was important, while the introduction of the decree would have been irrelevant.

These considerations may suffice for the general reader. Those who wish to prosecute the subject farther may consult Conybeare and Howson, vol. i., pp. 244–252; Lightfoot's "St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians," pp. 122–127, and the authorities there referred to; also "The New Testament History," edited by William Smith, LL.D., pp. 495–497.

X.

THE TWO CONTENTIONS.

GAL. ii., 11–21 ; ACTS xv., 30–41.

IMMEDIATELY after the settlement of the question which had been submitted by them to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, the delegates of the Church of Antioch returned to the brethren in the latter city, and read the letter which the conference had drawn up. The decision was received with great satisfaction, which was increased by the conciliatory addresses of Judas and Silas, who explained more fully the views and feelings of the council upon the subject; and who "tarried there a space, exhorting the brethren with many words, and confirming them." After a time, however, Judas went back to Jerusalem; but Silas remained, and, as we shall presently see, became the companion of Paul in his second missionary expedition. Meanwhile, the even flow of the history is disturbed by two personal misunderstandings which painfully remind us that even the best of men are liable to err.

The first of these was Paul's dispute with Peter, which is briefly described in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians.* It would appear that, after the holding of the assembly at Jerusalem, Peter went down to Antioch. We have no information concerning the motive by which he was actuated in taking such a journey. Perhaps he wished to

* Gal. ii., 11–21.

show that he, the apostle of the circumcision, was in perfect accord with Paul, the apostle of the uncircumcision, in regard to the principles involved in the recent controversy. His first proceedings, at least, would seem to favor that supposition; for, in harmony with the opinion which he had expressed in the debate, he mingled freely with the Gentiles, and ate with them precisely as if they had been Jews; but after certain persons came from James (that is, from the place where James was), "he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision." Some have supposed that the fear here attributed to Peter was not timidity, but rather an apprehension lest the Jews should by his conduct be driven into apostasy. That, however, seems to me to be an over-refinement. The simple truth is, that the men from Jerusalem got round him, and wrought upon his fears. They represented, perhaps, that a great outcry would be made against him by his friends in the Holy City; that he was taking a course which would seriously interfere with his future comfort and usefulness; and that, if he had any regard for his own happiness, he should at once retrace his steps. Thus they produced what we may term a panic in him, under the influence of which his calmer judgment was for the time dethroned; and he hastily changed his front in the presence of this new enemy. All this is quite in keeping with what we know from other sources of the character and temperament of Peter. Admirable as many of his qualities were, he was too much swayed by impulse, and not unfrequently went from one extreme to another. He was always one of the first to see and own the truth; but sometimes, when he was trying to act it out, he was turned aside by a temporary influence, and ended by proving inconsistent with his professions. To such an extent was this the case with him, that we might almost regard the incidents connected with his walking on

the water to go to Jesus as symbolical of much in his disposition and life. He was bold at first, and eager to go the whole length of principle; but as he trod upon the waves of difficulty, his fears sometimes overmastered his faith, and he began to sink. This vacillation, caused by a sudden access of fear hard to explain in one generally so courageous, might have been fraught with serious consequences both to himself and others, save for the fact that he was always ready to own his fault, and to do what he could to repair the mischief which he had caused. He was, "take him for all in all," a noble man; but he was the very last of the apostles to suggest the idea of infallibility; for side by side with the record of almost every signal manifestation by him of zeal for Christ and loyalty to him which the sacred writers have recorded, we have that also of some inconsistency which involved him in humiliation, and subjected him to reproof. He had scarcely said to the Redeemer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and received the high encomium which that confession of his faith evoked, before he drew down upon his head the rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" for presuming to stand between the Master and the cross. He had hardly uttered the solemn assertion, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee," before he timidly declared that he knew not the man. And here again, but a short time after his liberal speech at the council, he is found acting in such a way as to play into the hands of those whom he was then opposing. He did not mean to do anything wrong. His error was not one of deliberate purpose. Perhaps, indeed, his intention at the outset had been to go through with the principle which he had professed to adopt. Just as, with the exception of John, he was the only one of the eleven who followed Jesus to the high-priest's palace, and there met the temptation before which he fell, so here he

was purposing to go farther than others in showing brotherhood to the Gentiles, and thus brought upon himself such an assault as he was unable to face. His courage was so much greater than that of others as to take him where they would not venture; but it was not great enough to take him through all the perils which he thus encountered, and so he came back more humiliated than he would have been if he had not dared so much. If he did sink, however, do not let us forget that at the time he was trying to walk on the waters.

But while we can understand how he came to act as he did, we can see also how his conduct was distressing to Paul. That apostle, indeed, calls it "dissimulation;" but we must not make the word mean more than it will bear. Paul does not insinuate that Peter designed to impose upon others. He does not impute motives. He simply says that Peter's conduct conveyed to others a false impression as to his personal convictions. He appeared to others to have done what Paul knew he had not done. Peter had not changed his opinions. He was as sound in the faith as he had ever been. He was looking for salvation, not through the observance of the law of Moses, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and if any one had asked him whether he regarded circumcision as essential to salvation, he would at once, and emphatically, have disclaimed such a doctrine. But what Paul complained of was that his change of conduct at this particular time, and at the suggestion of these Jews, was calculated to convey the impression that he had altered his opinions. It looked as if he had gone over to the side of the circumcisionists; and appeared to give the sanction of his name and authority to views which Paul knew that he did not hold. The influence of such an example could not but be disastrous; and in fact it created a current of reaction by which even Barnabas was for

the moment carried back. Paul felt, therefore, that something should be done to counteract this evil, and the method which he adopted was eminently manly and straightforward. He did not go to and fro among the brethren, inveighing against Peter in his absence, but he went directly to the erring brother himself, and "withstood him to the face." He publicly remonstrated with him for taking a course which was liable to mislead those who did not know his innermost convictions as thoroughly as his confidential friends did. The expostulation addressed by him on this occasion is a masterpiece. It presents the finest combination of delicacy with faithfulness, and affection with firmness, and would amply repay minute consideration. But I must content myself with presenting you, in the form of a paraphrase, with the substance of the argument which it contains. It is something like the following: "If you, who are a Jew by birth, and have been brought up under the law of Moses, feel yourself at liberty to disregard its prohibitions, and to live, as you were doing, after the manner of the Gentiles, it is unreasonable to compel the Gentiles to conform to all the requirements of the Jewish law. You do not insist on this, indeed, in words. I believe that verbally you would repudiate any attempt to Judaize the Gentiles—even as you did in your address at the council; but still the natural inference from your present withdrawal from the Gentile brethren is, that you have now come to believe that circumcision is essential to salvation. For this is not a case of conforming to the wishes of a weak brother who concedes your liberty; it is a submission to those who say, 'Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.' Now observe how your conduct affects the fundamental principles of the Gospel. We, who are Jews, having become convinced that we could not be justified by the works of the law, have sought salvation through

faith in Christ. But if, in so doing, we are, after all, found to be sinners because we have wilfully neglected the law as an appointed means of salvation, then it must follow that Christ, who taught us to neglect it, in that relation, has been to us the minister of sin. That is a conclusion from which I know you will shrink with horror; but you must be prepared to face it, or you must admit that by your present conduct you have made yourself a transgressor. There is transgression somewhere. If you were wrong before in eating with the Gentiles, then, as you did that under the direct sanction of Christ given you in your Joppa vision, he has been to you the minister of sin. If you were right before, then you are wrong now, and you are yourself the transgressor. There is no other alternative; and I know you so well as to be convinced that, when the case is thus put before you, there will be no hesitation in your mind as to which course you will adopt. But however it may be with you, I have no misgivings on the matter. I declare that I have nothing to do with the law of Moses for my justification. Through the law itself—that is, by its condemning sentence—I died to the law. As soon as I saw myself in the light of its precepts, I gave up all hope of being saved by it. But I did not, therefore, repudiate all obligation; for then I came by faith into union with Christ; and such was the effect of that union, that, like him, I live unto God. I am crucified with him, indeed, as condemned by the law; yet I live, though in strictest speech I should say that it is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. In this way I do not make the grace of God unnecessary, as I certainly should do if I were to go back to the law for salvation; for, if it is possible to obtain righteousness by the law, then there was no need for the death of Christ."

Nothing is said by Paul as to the manner in which Peter received this brotherly expostulation; but, from what we know of his disposition, we may conclude that he frankly owned his error; and we have evidence that it left no permanent sting behind it in the fact that, long after, he wrote of his opponent here as "our beloved brother Paul."

Now, before we go farther, we may learn the following lessons from this personal contention between Paul and Peter: In the first place, before we withstand a brother, let us be quite sure that he is to be blamed, and that the occasion warrants our protest. Paul would not have cared to interfere with Peter in any trivial matter; nor would he have felt constrained to move in the case but for the handle which would be made of his peculiar vacillation just at that time. No one had a fuller comprehension of what Christian liberty involved than had Paul; and no one was more jealous of its infringement. If, therefore, he had not seen that the fundamental principle of the Gospel was at stake, he would not have said a word. The thing which Peter had done was in itself indifferent; but by doing it just then, at the appearance of the Judaizers, he had compromised that truth which was dearer to Paul than friendship, or even than life, and therefore he could not be silent. If he could have seen any possibility of explaining his brother's conduct in a way that was consistent with his loyalty to the Gospel and its Lord, he would have taken that, for he practised his own charity, which "believeth all things." But there was only one alternative here: either Peter had gone quite over to the party of the Judaizers, or he was trying to serve two masters. The first he could not believe, and he accepted the latter only because he was shut up to it. But, having accepted it, he founded on it the faithful and affectionate admonition which we have just had before us.

Now, let us learn from this example to withstand a broth-

er only when we are thus constrained to do so by our allegiance to the truth of the Gospel. If in any respect we cannot approve his conduct, while yet it may be explained in perfect harmony with his loyalty to Christ, let us give him the benefit of the explanation, and be silent. But if his procedure is such as seriously to compromise the purity of the Church or the truth of the Gospel, then let us withstand him. Nothing is more contemptible than to be always putting ourselves on the opposition benches; objecting to everything that is proposed by some particular brother, and going to a church meeting with the motive of the Scotchman for appearing in the debating society—"jist to contradic a wee." But on the other hand, nothing ought to be dearer to a Christian than "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is committed to his trust;" and if a brother is indulging in a liberty which would compromise that truth, or insisting on a strictness which would make the gate of life narrower than Christ has made it, then we should earnestly yet lovingly withstand him; but let us be sure that he is to be blamed for some such worthy cause before we expostulate with him.

Again, we may learn not to be deterred from opposing wrong by the position of him who has committed it. Peter was an apostle. He was, in fact, one of the greatest pillars of the early Church; but Paul was not prevented by any such considerations as these from protesting against his injudicious and unseemly vacillation. On the contrary, the very prominence of Peter made it all the more important that his inconsistency should be promptly and publicly dealt with. Had he been an ordinary member of the Church, moving only in private circles, Paul might have been disposed to pass his conduct by with a mild remonstrance; but his excellence as a man and his eminence as an apostle gave such importance to his example, that, if it remained

unchecked, much evil would have ensued. Therefore Paul took the course which he adopted. No doubt it cost him a great deal to do so; but it would have cost him more to have let things take their course, and allowed the liberty of the Gospel, for the time, to be destroyed. It was not, therefore, because he loved Peter less, but because he loved the truth more, that he uttered this glowing and uncompromising admonition. But the same principles hold still; error or evil is dangerous in any man, but it is far more so in a leader of the people or a minister of the Gospel than in others; and when it appears in one in that position, then, however painful it may be to take our stand, loyalty to Christ leaves us no alternative. We ought lovingly, indeed, but firmly and courageously, to oppose the evil and expostulate with the evil-doer. Great eminence may command our respect, but the truth is before all things else; and nothing whatever should be allowed by us to excuse treason to that. Nay, the more prominent its assailant may be, there is only laid upon us thereby the stronger obligation to withstand him. The reputation of any man is of small consequence when the truth of God's word or the purity of Christ's Church is involved.

Once more we may learn from Paul's conduct here that when we withstand a brother, it should be to his face. He did not go hither and thither among the elders, speaking against Peter and complaining of his course, while at the same time he kept unbroken silence concerning it to Peter himself. He did not say in Peter's absence that which he was afraid to utter before his face; but he spoke out all that was in his heart openly, and to Peter himself. Now, in this also he has set us a valuable example. When we have anything to say in condemnation of a brother's actions, let us say it to himself. Too often, alas! a contrary method is pursued, both in the Church and in the world; and men

go round the whole circle of society, turning it into a great "whispering gallery," in which they sibilate away the character of one who has had no opportunity of vindicating himself. "It is very sad, and you must not say that I spoke to you on the subject, but he has done thus and so, and I feel terribly aggrieved." Thus it passes on from one to another, gathering as it goes, until a thing which might at first have been set right by a few kindly and faithful words assumes a very formidable appearance, and perhaps ends in the permanent estrangement of the persons more immediately concerned, and the production of discord and heart-burning in the whole district. If, therefore, we have anything to say of a brother, let us say it first to himself, and the probability is that we may never have occasion to mention it again. Let us say nothing in his absence that we would not utter in his presence; and if we have not the courage to speak to him, let us at least have the grace to be silent about him.

Nor does this lesson concern the speaker only: it has a bearing also on the hearer; and when any one comes to us with an evil report against his neighbor, let us refuse to listen to him, unless he has assured us that he has already told the person concerned all that he is going to say to us. "Where no wood is, fire goeth out;" and if all to whom evil gossip is carried were only to treat those who deal in it according to this rule, we should soon banish it from the midst of us. Who would harbor an assassin in his house? Yet the man who strikes at a neighbor's character in his absence is as bad as he who with stealthy stiletto stabs the unwary traveller from behind. If we must withstand a man, therefore, let us do it to his face.

From the conduct of Peter here, however, we may learn the no less valuable lesson that when we are thus withstood we should take it meekly, and, if we are in the wrong, should

frankly own our error, and retrace our steps as rapidly as possible. I believe that Paul's appeal was not in vain. He was too noble to include in his letter to the Galatians anything which would seem to aggravate a brother; and from what we know of Peter on other occasions, we may be sure that on this also he was as ready in the confession of his fault as he had been rash in its commission. Indeed, the careful student of his epistles will discover that in this very matter he uses language in them which is singularly like that employed by Paul. Thus the one apostle has said, "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another;" and in his first epistle the other has these words: "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." We cannot doubt, therefore, that he accepted Paul's rebuke in the spirit of meekness. Now in all this there was a magnanimity which is worthy of all praise. So far as appears, he did not become excited, and exclaim against Paul for presuming to think that he could be wrong, but he did a more difficult and a more manly thing: he acknowledged his fault. Now here was a great triumph of grace. It may seem a paradox to say it, but there are few things which test a man's real Christianity more than reproof for that which is actually blameworthy. It is comparatively easy to guard against giving offence; but it is exceeding hard to keep from taking offence in such circumstances, and to say with the Psalmist, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." We all assent to Solomon's proverb, "Open rebuke is better than secret love;" but when the rebuke comes, most of us, on the whole, would prefer the love; and too frequently we are disposed to resent the faithfulness of the brother who should hint, even in

the most delicate manner, that we have been in the wrong. We cry out against the modern dogma of papal infallibility, but we have all too much belief in that of our own infallibility; for our tempers are roused, and our hearts are estranged by any exposure of our error or inconsistency. How many personal alienations and ecclesiastical schisms might have been prevented, if there had been on the one side the honest frankness of Paul, and on the other the manly meekness of Peter as these come out in this transaction!*

The other contention, of which Antioch was the scene, was in its origin more painful, and in its immediate consequences more distressing, than that with Peter. It will be remembered that when Paul and Barnabas were at Perga, in the course of their first missionary journey, John Mark, who had been till then their companion and fellow-laborer, suddenly departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. There he remained during all the time that the two evangelists were hazarding their lives in Pisidia and Lycaonia, and, for anything that we know to the contrary, during the years that intervened between their return to Antioch and their delegation to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. At the close of the council, however, it would appear that, either under the promptings of his own conscience or as the result of his uncle's appeals, he returned with them to Antioch. And when, eager to be at work again, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they should revisit the brethren in every city where they had preached the Gospel, his friend made it a condition that Mark should accompany them. To this, however, Paul would not consent. On the former occasion Mark had disappointed his expectations. He had put his hand

* Some of the paragraphs in this discourse have already appeared in the author's "Peter the Apostle;" but they are retained here to give completeness to the treatment of the subject.

to the plough and looked back; and therefore Paul would not trust him again. He did not forbid him to work for Christ, but he would not have him again under his auspices. There was enough to contend with in the difficulties and dangers which were inseparable from such an expedition as they proposed, without burdening themselves with the care of a timid and unreliable companion; and therefore his decision was that Mark should be left behind. But Barnabas, influenced by his affection for his nephew, and perhaps also by his well-founded belief that Mark had profited by his experience, insisted upon taking him, and the result was "a sharp contention," or, as the word is, "paroxysm," between them. They were both angry, and manifested unseemly excitement. This little matter kindled a great fire; and these two noble men who had been indebted to each other for so much, and who in their hearts loved each other most sincerely, "departed asunder one from the other." Barnabas took Mark, and went to Cyprus; Paul took Silas, and went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. In connection with Paul's departure, a valedictory service was held by the disciples at Antioch, and some have taken that as indicating that their sympathies were with him rather than with Barnabas, to whom no such public farewell, in which he was recommended to the grace of God, was given; but it is safer to let the fact stand as it is recorded, without drawing any inference from it as to the feelings of the Church in regard to the dispute between them. For the rest, it is pleasant to discover that this personal separation did not ultimately lessen the regard which Paul had for his friend; for there are evidences in his letters of the hold which the "son of consolation" continued to keep upon his heart. Thus in the Epistle to the Galatians,* written some time

* Gal. ii., 13.

after this breach, we see how he speaks of "*even* Barnabas" being carried away, as if he still held him in the highest esteem. Again, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,* written five or six years after their separation, he says, "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" an expression which looks as if the two were again companions, and which, even if we do not adopt that view, clearly indicates that Barnabas was remembered by Paul with affection unmingled with the least element of bitterness. We know too that he regained his respect for Mark. It comes out incidentally in one of his letters,† that during his first imprisonment at Rome, Mark was with him; and it is with a singular interest that we read his injunction to Timothy, written shortly before his execution: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."‡ These allusions, after all that had occurred, are equally creditable to both parties. They show that Mark had grown steady and brave, and was not above ministering to Paul; and they prove that Paul was not so mean as to keep up an old grudge, when all that caused it had been perfectly removed.

And now what more can be said on this sad subject? Luke, under divine inspiration, impartially narrates the history; but he gives no apportionment of blame to either party, and it would be dangerous for me to venture on such invidious ground. Thus much, however, I may say without fear of being accounted either presumptuous or censorious: there were faults on both sides. Judging from what had gone before, Paul cannot be condemned for refusing to be again associated with Mark; but judging from what followed, Barnabas was amply vindicated for desiring that he should be taken with them. Though we must admit that

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* 1 Cor. ix., 6. † Col. iv., 10. ‡ 2 Tim. iv., 11.

Paul's sternness was one of the means which helped to discipline Mark into strength, yet we cannot help feeling that the great apostle was just a little too intolerant of weakness. Barnabas, again, may have allowed his relationship to Mark unduly to influence his opinion. If the one was too stern, the other may have been too indulgent. The sternness of Paul, if it had not been softened by the tenderness of Barnabas, might have driven Mark away from Christian work altogether. The leniency of Barnabas, if it had not been corrected by the sternness of Paul, might have made Mark an utter weakling. But, as it happened, the two wrought together under the providence of the Holy Spirit, and tempered him into strength.

But whatever may be said about their treatment of Mark, we may affirm that there was no occasion for any angry altercation about him. As we think of two such men thus falling out with each other, it is difficult to say whether we are more sorry or surprised. We mourn that these good and great men should have been thus easily provoked. We are surprised that Paul should have for the moment forgotten the kindness of Barnabas to him when he introduced him to the apostles at Jerusalem, and his brotherly appreciation of his ability, when, at a later day, he went to Tarsus to secure his services as a helper in the Gospel. Nor are we less astonished that Barnabas, the son of consolation, should have been here so violent. Surely we have seen "an end of all perfection," when such men thus sinfully dispute.

But, not to dwell on the dark side of the subject, let us take note of some mitigating elements in this contention. It will be observed, then, that the dispute arose from a difference of opinion about the best means of carrying on Christ's work. Had Paul cared less for Jesus and his cause, he would not have been so vehement; and, on the other

hand, if Barnabas had been less concerned for the spiritual welfare of Mark, he would have been less persistent. Therefore, although there was sin in the quarrel, still the very origin of the contention showed that it was the dispute of Christian men.

Again, let it be remarked that they took ultimately the best means of deciding the controversy. As when the herdmen of Abram and Lot fell out, the agreement proposed by the former was, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right,"* so here Barnabas went with Mark to Cyprus, and Paul proceeded with Silas to Cilicia.

Still further, we must not forget that this dispute did not permanently estrange them from each other. Commonly, indeed, it is with friendship as with crockery, which, when broken, may be mended, but the crack remains; and I am not prepared to say that all evidence of the crack was removed even in this case; but when the heat of the contention was over, they acknowledged each other's excellence as frankly as ever, and if the reputation of Barnabas had been assailed, he would have found no more zealous defender than Paul; while, if Paul had been attacked, Barnabas would have been among the first to stand up in his behalf.

It is easy to see, finally, how even this contention was overruled for the furtherance of the Gospel, so that now there were four laborers in the field instead of three. Thus, "God maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof he doth restrain."

In a former discourse, while speaking of the defection of Mark, I took occasion to warn young disciples against stumbling on the threshold of their Christian career, lest their instability should alienate older and better men from each other; and I pointed out the necessity of mingling gentle-

* Gen. xiii., 9.

ness with severity if we would win back the erring one to the right path. To-night, therefore, I will content myself with drawing one practical lesson from this painful chapter of apostolic history; and it shall be this: let us take care lest differences in little things, involving personal preferences, should cause angry altercations and painful separations between valued friends. In the great discussion with Peter, which had a bearing on the fundamental principle of the Gospel, there was no paroxysm of passion; but in this little dispute about Mark between Paul and Barnabas, there was. On public occasions of importance there is comparatively little danger, for the gravity of the issue is then clearly seen, and men prepare themselves for the discussion by prayer; while all through they hold themselves in, as it were, "with bit and bridle." But in small personal encounters the peril is immensely increased; for then all parties are off their guard, minor considerations of relationship or interest come into operation, and, before the disputants are aware, the debate becomes a wrangle, Satan is in the midst of them, and sets them all by the ears. If I had my choice, I would rather see a controversy spring up in a church about some great central doctrine than about some question of paltry detail of arrangement or of pitiful personality; for there would be less likelihood in the one case than in the other of an angry and acrimonious debate. "Little sticks kindle great fires." The flame that would die out before it could set fire to a log will easily ignite a chip, and that may have strength enough to kindle a fagot that will at length set the log in a blaze. Take care, therefore, especially in little things, lest temper should explode, and make a painful separation between you and your friend. Admirably has the poet said:

> "Alas! how light a cause may move
> Dissension between those that love.

Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
And sorrow but more closely tied;
That stood the storm when waves were rough,
Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
Like ships that have gone down at sea
When heaven was all tranquillity.
A something light as air, a look,
A word unkind, or wrongly taken—
Oh! love that tempests never shook,
A breath, a touch like this hath shaken!"

May God grant that none of us may ever in any way furnish another illustration of these lines!

XI.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY BAND.

ACTS XV., 41; XVI., 11.

ACCOMPANIED by Silas, Paul went from Antioch through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches everywhere by the publication of the Jerusalem decree, and by seasonable instructions. We have no record of the places which he visited at this time, but it is hardly likely that Tarsus would be overlooked; and we are permitted to dwell in imagination on the pleasure with which he would be received by the people among whom he had formerly labored, in those days of unrecognition ere yet Barnabas had come to carry him away to Antioch.

From Cilicia he passed up through the mountain range of Taurus by the famous Gates, which was the name given to a wild and rocky pathway resembling one of those Alpine passes between Switzerland and Italy, over which annually so many tourists travel with a strange commingling of astonishment, admiration, and terror. According to Howson,* the journey by this route from Tarsus to Iconium is enough, in modern times, to take up four laborious days; and though the road was probably more carefully maintained by the Roman Government than it is now, the number of days required for its passage could never have been much smaller. On his former visit to this central region, Paul went from Perga to Antioch, and thence to Lycaonia. Then he approached

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* Vol. i., 280.

the district last named from the east, but now he came upon it from the west; and that is the reason why, in the narrative of this second journey, the towns visited are named in the reverse order to that in which they were taken before. In the fourteenth chapter we have first Iconium, then Lystra, and then Derbe; but now Derbe is first, then Lystra, and then Iconium. No doubt the brethren in all these places would have many questions to ask concerning Paul's own experiences since he had been among them, concerning Barnabas, his former colleague, and concerning the controversy in which he had been engaged, and the manner in which it had been settled by the conference at Jerusalem. We may be sure, also, that they were much refreshed by Paul's fellowship and exhortations, and by the cheering assurance which Silas gave that they were regarded with brotherly affection by the apostles and elders of the Jewish Church. But none of these things are here narrated; because this journey, in its influence on the personal history of Paul, was chiefly memorable for the fact that now for the first time Timothy was associated with him in that tender and endearing companionship which continued, with but few and brief interruptions, until the day when he passed through the flaming gate of martyrdom into the celestial city.

Here, therefore, it may be convenient to intermit for a little the main history on the consideration of which we are engaged, while we attempt to bring together all that the New Testament gives of biographical detail concerning one who was for so many years in such close fellowship with our beloved apostle. He was already a disciple at the time of this third visit made by Paul to Lycaonia; and, as the apostle calls him elsewhere his "own son in the faith,"* we conclude that on the occasion of his first visit to that region

* 1 Tim. i., 3.

Paul had been instrumental in his conversion. He was the son of a Jewess named Eunice, who was also a convert to Christianity, but his father was a Gentile. Some have supposed that his father was a proselyte to the Jewish faith, while, from the silence of the historian regarding him, others have conjectured that he had died before Paul came into contact with his son. If he was alive, he certainly could not have been a Jewish proselyte, or in any sense an admirer of the Mosaic law, otherwise he would not have neglected the initiatory rite of Judaism in the case of his son. I rather think that he was a careless Gentile, who had no deep religious convictions of any sort, and who could have, therefore, no very positive influence for good on the training of his son; but if that were true, his lack of service was supplied by the piety of his wife. Judging, indeed, from the fact that she had entered into one of those mixed marriages which were forbidden to the Jews, we are compelled to acknowledge that in her maidenhood she had in some degree fallen away from her allegiance to the God of her fathers; but the birth of her boy may have made her more thoughtful on religious matters. Her motherhood, as in the case of multitudes besides her, may have developed the spiritual side of her nature, and for her son's sake she may have begun to cultivate that personal religion which perhaps she had too largely neglected for her own.

But however she was led to take an interest in the instruction of her son, she was effectually assisted in her efforts to train him in the right path by her mother, Lois, who seems to have lived with her; and there are few more charming pictures of pious home life than that which is suggested to our imaginations by the words of Paul long afterward to Timothy,* "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that

* 2 Tim. i., 5.

is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also;" and again,* "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." In the chimney of the room where the little fragile Philip Doddridge usually sat with his mother, there was a series of Dutch tiles representing the principal events of Scriptural history. "In bright blue, on a ground of glistering white, were pictures of the serpent in the tree, of Noah building his great ship, of Elisha's bears devouring the youths, and of all the outstanding incidents of holy writ; and when the frost made the fire burn clear, and the little Philip was snug in the arm-chair beside his mother, it was endless joy to hear the stories that lurked in the painted porcelain. That mother could not foresee the outgoings of her early lesson; but when the little boy had become a famous divine, and was publishing the 'Family Expositor,' he could not forget the nursery Bible in the chimney tiles."† So I picture to myself the boy Timothy standing by his grandmother's knee, and looking up with eager eyes into her face as she told him those matchless stories which seem to have been preserved in this book for the very purpose of interesting the young in its pages; and which, besides the merit of their unquestionable truth, fill and expand the imagination, convey many valuable lessons, and give reality as well as grandeur to a child's idea of God. The history of Joseph and his brethren; the finding of the baby Moses by the edge of the Nile; the dividing of the Red Sea; the giving of the law from Sinai; the passage of the Jordan; the taking of Jericho; the boyhood of Samuel; the duel between David and Goliath; Daniel's firmness and deliverance—these and

* 2 Tim. iii., 15.

† "Our Christian Classics," by James Hamilton, D.D., vol. iii., p. 365.

other narratives, as interesting as they are instructive, would be told with reverence to this eager child; and as she went on, the very fact that she was now among the heathen, so far from the land of her fathers and the temple of her God, would fill her soul with such earnestness that her words would take fire, and fall with kindling enthusiasm into the heart of Timothy. Now and again both would turn and refer to the "house-mother" for some forgotten incident, or some desired explanation; and thus the three would grow into each other, and these lessons from the sacred oracles would lay up memories that would be fragrant all through their earthly lives — ay, memories that are fresh and holy yet, as they are together before the eternal throne. That mother and grandmother knew not all they were doing in these sacred hours. Perhaps at times they were apt to grow despondent; and, brooding over their isolation among the heathen, they might often think that they were doing little or nothing to purpose for the Lord; but they were preparing Timothy for his life-work as an evangelist, and now the lustre of his crown reflects a glory upon their faces. Nor is this a solitary case. The day alone will declare how many who have done yeoman's service in the cause of Christ have been thus prepared by a mother's influence for their after triumphs; and many a venerable Lois, while receiving the filial kindness of a daughter, has been the means of bringing priceless blessings to her grandchildren. The very presence in a household of such a one, whose wisdom is like a chapter of the Book of Proverbs, and whose weakness is a constant call for affection and self-sacrifice, is itself a training of the highest order to the children. There are few teachers more affectionate and influential than a grandmother; and in the Lois to whom Timothy was so much indebted I see the prototype of many who have been loving professors in that home seminary, where God has

educated some of his most eminent servants. Over one of these, taken from my own household, the grave closed but two days ago; and, with her memory so fresh within me, I can the better appreciate the services of Lois here.*

This mother and her daughter, then, were among those spiritual Jews who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Like Simeon, and Anna, and the guileless Nathaniel, they loved the law of the Lord. It was their study and their delight; and so they were in a measure prepared for the Gospel before it was proclaimed to them. Thus they were among the earliest of Paul's Lycaonian converts. But during the interval between Paul's first and second missionary journeys, Timothy seems to have come into some sort of prominence among the brethren, for he was known not only at Lystra, but also at Iconium.† The words of the historian are, "which was well reported of"—literally "who was borne witness to"—by the brethren; and they may refer either to the general testimony that was given to his character, or to what Paul has called elsewhere,‡ "the prophecies which went before concerning him." I am disposed to regard the latter as the true meaning. During Paul's absence, or perhaps at the very time of this third visit to Lystra, the brethren who had received the gift of prophecy did, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, point out Timothy as one admirably fitted for the work of the ministry. These testimonies deeply moved the heart of the apostle, who was longing for some one who should be to him what Mark, if he had been steadfast, might have become; and so he determined to take Timothy with him as his companion. He was not, indeed, a man cast at all in the same mould as Paul. Brought up, as

* I leave these words as they were written, that they may be a permanent memorial of one who dwelt under my roof for a score of happy years.

† Acts xvi., 2. ‡ 1 Tim. i., 18.

we have seen he was, mainly by his mother and his grandmother, his piety retained through life something of a feminine delicacy. He lacked the stern and rugged robustness of the man of Tarsus. His nature was emotional rather than intellectual; and, far from being at home in such exciting scenes as those in which Paul so conspicuously shone, he courted retirement, and sought to keep himself from the antagonism of others. But probably it was this very dissimilarity to himself that attracted Paul in Timothy. We often see that friendship of the closest kind subsists between those who are very unlike each other; and the reason is, because the one finds in the other the qualities in which he is himself defective. Now, somehow thus it must have been with Paul and Timothy. They were bound to each other by the fact that they supplemented each other—that which was strongest in the one going to sustain that which was weakest in the other. The aged apostle leaned on the youth of the evangelist, and the young minister must have drawn largely on the rich stores of Paul's experience for guidance amid perplexities. The gentleness of Timothy gave a shading to the sternness of Paul, even as the soft lichens lend a beauty to the rock which they fringe. And the unflinching fortitude of Paul gave courage to the soul of Timothy when he was called to endure persecution; even as the oak holds up amid the storm the ivy which has twined around its trunk. Beautiful exceedingly was their devotion to each other. On the one hand, fatherly, I might almost say motherly, solicitude, not only for the piety and ministerial efficiency of Timothy, but also for his bodily health; on the other filial tenderness and affectionate reverence for Paul, coupled with constancy even in the most dangerous circumstances. They were never absent from each other without longing for the time when they should be reunited; and history has no more touching story than that which tells

of the aged prisoner at Rome writing to his young friend, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me;" and again, "Do thy diligence to come before winter;"* or of the young man hastening to the Imperial City to cheer the last moments of his much-loved friend. Like the young Knox attending on the martyr Wishart, Timothy was a minister to Paul, all the more valuable because his lustre, therein like that of the satellite that waits upon our earth, became brightest in the hours of darkness.

Three things, however, Paul did with Timothy before he took him formally as his companion. First: "he took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."† At first sight this action on the part of the apostle appears to be inconsistent with the stand which he took at Jerusalem and Antioch. "How is it," we are disposed to ask, "that he refused to allow Titus to be circumcised, while he yields in the case of Timothy? Is there not here a vacillation as great as that which he so emphatically condemned in Peter?" But when we look again, we discover that, though the ritual act of circumcision is involved in both cases, the circumstances of the two were entirely different. The controversy at Antioch turned on the question whether or not Gentile believers should be required to submit to circumcision as a thing essential to their salvation. There had been no debate about the propriety of the Jews continuing to observe the law of Moses, provided they did not seek to impose it upon others. Now Titus was a Gentile, and because his circumcision was insisted upon as something necessary to his salvation, Paul resisted that demand; but Timothy was a Jew by the mother's side, and, according to the common law of the time that the son followed the mother, he was re-

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* 2 Tim. iv., 9, 21. † Acts xvi., 3.

garded as virtually a Jew. Hence his circumcision was not the yielding of any principle so far as the Gentiles were concerned, while it would remove the prejudices of Jews against him, and open for him a wider door of usefulness than otherwise he could have entered. Again, the circumcision of Titus had been demanded as an essential thing by the Judaizing party; that of Timothy, however, was not insisted upon by anybody, but was done by Paul on his own responsibility, merely to remove a sentimental objection which Jews might have to him, and which might prevent them from profiting by his ministrations. Thus we learn that the same outward act may become either a wrong to be resisted, or a matter of prudence to be performed, according to the circumstances in which we are placed. Mark, however, that this is true only of things which are in themselves indifferent, and cannot hold of those which are either good or evil in their own nature.

Second: Paul conferred on Timothy the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; for he says to him, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."* This was a personal benefit bestowed by the apostle on his companion by the will of God.

Third: this private endowment was followed by a public service at which Timothy was ordained to the office of the ministry; for, beyond all controversy, that is what Paul means when he says,† "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy" (that is, according to the prophecy which pointed thee out for it), "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" or company of elders. The former gift was a personal possession. This was a public and official recognition. Thus Paul did all things "decently and in order." Apostle though he was, he did not take

* 2 Tim. i., 6. † 1 Tim. iv., 14.

it upon himself to ordain Timothy; but he let that act be performed by the Church through its eldership; and so, wherever he went, Timothy carried within him the qualifications imparted by the Holy Ghost, and upon him the sanction given him by the Church. These are the two essentials to the office of the ministry. The disregard of the first leads to inefficiency; the neglect of the second issues in disorder; in the union of the two will be found the best safeguard for the purity of the pulpit, the effectiveness of the ministry, and the permanence of the Church.

After having visited all the churches formerly planted in this upland district of Lycaonia, Paul and Silas entered upon new ground in Phrygia and Galatia. In the former province, whose boundaries cannot now be easily defined, the city of Colosse was situated, as also were those of Hierapolis and Laodicea. In each of these places mention is made at a later date of flourishing churches; but they could not have been founded by Paul, for in his letter to the Colossians he refers to the brethren in all these three cities as not having seen his face in the flesh.* We cannot, therefore, agree with those who suppose that they were visited by him on this occasion, although Pressensé's† conjecture may be correct that Epaphras may have come with him from Antioch, and may have been detailed by him for the special service of introducing the Gospel to these places.

The province of Galatia had in it some important cities, of which the three principal were Pessinus, Ancyra, and Tavium, in all of which it is likely that churches were at this time formed. The population of this region was of a composite description. First, there were the descendants of the Gauls, who somewhere about three hundred years before the birth of Christ had invaded Asia Minor, and were at length

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* Col. ii., 1. † "Early Years of Christianity," pp. 147, 148.

overcome by Attalus of Pergamus, who hemmed them in within the comparatively narrow limits of the province which was called by their name. These retained the peculiarities which even till this day have kept such persistent hold of all the branches of the Celtic race. Next there were the genuine Phrygians, who were devoted to the idolatry of Bacchus and Cybele. Then came the Greek colonists, who carried with them their language, their culture, and their philosophy. To these must be added a large Jewish element, of which a part may have been descended from those Jews whom Antiochus settled in Phrygia, and a part may have been attracted by the facilities which Galatia afforded for commercial enterprise. Each of these classes brought its own deposit, and contributed it to the formation of the national character; but the dominating qualities were those of the Gauls. The rugged external features of the half-barbarous Europeans had yielded somewhat to the enervating influences of the effeminate Phrygian climate; but beneath the surface they were Celtic still, and were distinguished by eager restlessness, shallow vivacity, short-lived enthusiasm, and that "unreliable fickleness" which Julius Cæsar found in his Gallic allies and antagonists. Indeed, one cannot read Paul's letter to these churches without being reminded that the Galatians were the kinsmen of those whom the great Roman general has described as "fickle in taking up plans, fond of innovating, and utterly untrustworthy." When Paul visited them on this occasion he was suffering from some severe bodily affliction—probably from an unusually acute attack of that chronic malady which he has elsewhere called his "thorn in the flesh;"* for in his letter he speaks of having preached to them at first "through infirmity of the flesh."† But the effect of his weakness was to elicit the

* 2 Cor. xii., 7. † Gal. iv., 13.

sympathy and kindness of his hearers; for he represents them as neither despising nor rejecting his trial, but as receiving him as if he had been an angel of the Lord; nay, as if he had been Christ himself.* Such had been their eagerness to help him, that he bears them record that, if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him. His preaching among them had been a setting forth before their eyes of Jesus Christ as evidently crucified among them;† and, as Lightfoot has said, "If we picture to ourselves the apostle as he appeared before the Galatians, a friendless outcast, writhing under the tortures of a painful malady, yet instant in season and out of season, by turns denouncing and entreating, appealing to the agonies of a crucified Saviour, perhaps also, as at Lystra, enforcing this appeal by some striking miracle, we shall be at no loss to conceive how the fervid temperament of the Gaul might have been aroused, while yet only the surface of his spiritual consciousness was ruffled."‡

From Galatia, Paul and his two companions wished to go to the region of Asia properly so called, which consisted of the provinces of Lycia, Mysia, and Caria; but, either by some prophetic utterance or by some providential hinderance, they were kept from carrying out their desire. They turned, therefore, to Bithynia; but neither were they allowed to tarry there. So they went to Troas, where they were in the very heart of that region which the father of poetry has made classic by the "Iliad;" but no notice is taken here of that. The city was a port of departure for Europe, and their coming to it may be taken as an indication that already they had some idea of crossing the Archipelago, though it had not yet taken definite shape within their souls. Not

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* Gal. iv., 14, 15. † Gal. iii., 1.

‡ "Lightfoot on the Epistle to the Galatians," p. 24.

long, however, were they suffered to remain in uncertainty; for "a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." This settled the matter; and so they took ship immediately, and running across the Ægean, taking Samothracia in their course, they landed at Neapolis.

I call your attention to a change in the manner of the narrator, in the tenth verse of this sixteenth chapter of his history, which indicates that Luke, the author of this book, first joined the company of the apostle at Troas. We read as follows: "And after he had seen the vision, immediately *we* endeavored to go into Macedonia." Heretofore he had used the third personal pronoun; but from this point on, with certain short intervals which will be marked by us as we come upon them, he employs the first, including himself with those of whom he writes. From the peculiarity of his name, Luke seems to have been a Gentile. Tradition has alleged, but without any absolute authority,* that he was a native of Antioch; and from the fact that he was a physician, some have inferred that he was a freedman, since among the Romans the study of medicine was generally left to slaves, many of whom were very skilful. That he had received a liberal education, is apparent from the style of the original, both of his gospel and of this history. How he came to connect himself with Paul, we are nowhere informed. Probably they had met before at Antioch, and perhaps Luke, pitying Paul's liability to illness, may have wished to accompany him, and mitigate as far as he could the sufferings which his malady occasioned. We know, at least, that he loved the Lord, and the servant for the Lord's sake; and

* See on this point "Dissertation on the Life and Writings of St. Luke," in "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul," by James Smith, Esq., pp. 4–9.

so became from this time on, with but two brief intervals, the constant medical attendant of the great apostle. He left a profession which was made by many, even then, a lucrative one, to become the travelling companion of a man who was poor in this world's goods, and whose great ambition, alike in weakness and in strength, was to preach "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Some would call him a fool for his pains; but see how, though he missed a fortune, he is to-night, after the lapse of more than eighteen centuries, working among us through this history, though all save a very few of the more prominent men of the ancient world have been forgotten. Nor let us forget that he is now himself in the presence of his Lord, realizing the blessedness of the reward enfolded in these words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." How little men know about their contemporaries! and how falsely we conjecture about each other's chances for perennial renown! On the imperial throne at this time one Claudius sat, and it might have seemed that he was likely to be remembered longest; but now, for one who cares about Claudius, there are hundreds of thousands whose hearts respond to the bare mention of the name of Luke. And perhaps, of all who are living now, he that will be most lovingly referred to a thousand years hence is to-night in some obscure locality, drawing ridicule upon his head because he chooses to minister to Christ in the person of one of his afflicted servants. Of this at least we may be sure, that the unknown becomes at length the well-known when he works for Jesus.

These four, then—Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke—after a brief voyage from Troas, landed at Neapolis; and so the first Christian apostle came to Europe. What food for meditation have we here! Consider what the Gospel has done in that quarter of the globe in all these years; yet we

trace all that back to its proximate source in the arrival of these strangers at Neapolis. It was the beginning of a new era, and there has been nothing precisely like it since, unless we put beside it the voyage of Columbus across the Atlantic, or that of the Pilgrim Fathers in the *Mayflower*. But these expeditions, after all, were more or less selfish in their motives, for the Spanish admiral went for fame, and gold, and conquest, and the fathers went for "freedom to worship God;" but Paul and his companions were on a mission of purest benevolence, for they carried with them the message of salvation. Their voyage, therefore, stands out by itself, as unique as it is glorious. They went to Europe, not for their own comfort, for in almost every city they were opposed, and in some they were imprisoned; not for wealth, for they had to depend on their own hands for their support, but for the good of their fellow-men. They went to plant a seed from which have sprung liberty, law, progress, and religion on that continent, and all the blessings which in this western land we now enjoy. They went to begin a revolution, not of anarchy and blood and battle, but of slowly working principles, which are in operation still, and which will continue to operate until "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord." The gigantic trees in the Mariposa grove sprung each from a seed no bigger than a grain of wheat, though it took them centuries to grow. Here, in the landing of Paul with the Gospel at Neapolis, we have the germ out of which European and American Christianity has been developed. It has required centuries for its production, yet what a marvel, far above these giants of the forest, it is to-day. With all its imperfections, it is the grandest thing this earth has ever seen; and as we look here at its beginning, and then around us at its vigor and efficiency, we think of David's song: "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of

the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: and all nations shall call him blessed."

I conclude with two practical lessons.

In the first place, let us be reminded of the importance of family religious training. Timothy was fitted for his work as really by the pious and hidden ministry of his mother and grandmother as by the public instructions of Paul. Perhaps there is special need to emphasize this example now. For in this busy age, when men are wearied and worried with business cares, and women are burdened with domestic anxieties, I fear that we are apt to lose sight of the importance of "the Church in the house." I have no words but those of appreciation and gratitude for the Sunday-school. I think that there are few more significant, I had almost said, more sublime facts, in the history of our generation, than this, that so many thousands of Christian men and women have given systematically, continuously, and gratuitously their services to the Church for the religious instruction of the young. Yet we must not allow the Sunday-school to become a substitute for home instruction. Whatever other agencies Christian parents call to their assistance, theirs must still be the superintendence of their children's religious education. The Sabbath-school may do much; but still, father and mother ought to supervise and direct, guarding against all error that may insidiously introduce itself, and watching against everything that may tend to injure the characters of the children. In particular, it ought to be their delight to introduce their little ones to a knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. The first remembrance a child has of the word of God should be associated with one or other or both of his parents. Its stories will come with

special interest from their lips. Its Psalms will have new music as they sing them. Its parables will acquire a peculiar charm as they repeat them. The telling of some Bible history ought to be granted to children as a reward for any service or conduct worthy of commendation. But never on any account ought such topics to be associated with punishment, or the idea to be given them that the Scriptures are so much task work to be portioned out piece by piece in penal imposition. Let parents only begin and carry on lovingly, wisely, and systematically with their children such a course of home training for years, not on the Sabbaths alone, but on all days alike, and soon the Lord will lay his hands in blessing on the heads of the little ones, and make them the means of rendering effective service to their generation in after-days. Is it so, my hearers, that such parental instruction is a rare thing now? Is it so, that the infant class in the Sunday-school has taken too largely the place of such home lessons? Surely it cannot be. The infant class is a delightful institution, and I would not desire to see it do less than it is doing now; but the fact of its existence and the effect of its exercises ought to make it all the more easy for you to supplement its instructions, and to add the endorsement of your approval to the emphasis of its teacher's words. Let me implore you, therefore, Christian parents, whoever else may be engaged in the religious training of your children, to give it also your personal and pre-eminent attention. And when they begin to read for themselves, keep a watchful eye on the sort of literature they choose, for unless you do that, some pernicious influence may enter their hearts, and the work of many years may be endangered by the poisonous effect of some trashy and sensational tale. Look for the conversion of your children not so much as the result of a pastor's sermons or a teacher's lessons, as of your own prayers, and talks, and

example; and when it comes, greet it with a gladness greater, if also more sacred, than that with which you hold a birthday festival.

Finally, let us learn that the Gospel is the best help we can bring to a man. The great root out of which all evils spring is sin. Now, as the Gospel comes to proclaim deliverance both from the guilt and power of sin, it follows that it will ultimately mitigate and remove the miseries that have emanated from it. When we dry up the source, the streams will no longer flow. Thus it comes that for every form of individual and social degradation the Gospel is the certain remedy. How many there are in these days crying for help! We are meeting this man of Macedonia everywhere; and go where we may, his appeal, "Come over and help us!" is ringing in our ears. The drunkard, the poor, degraded victim of appetite, the discontented, the destitute, the criminal, and the unfortunate—all are crying, each in his own way, for our assistance; and many are the expedients which have been resorted to for their amelioration and relief. They are all good, so far. They all do something; but none of them goes to the seat of the evil but the Gospel. All the others only "skim and film the ulcerous sore" for the time; the Gospel alone works out a permanent cure. It is the heart that is wrong; and only when that is renewed will the man become what he was designed by God to be. Whatever else we do for the relief or reclamation of our fellow-men, therefore, we must seek to give them the Gospel, for that alone can meet their need; and so the Christian Church, if she were what she ought to be, would be the best social science association; the best temperance society; the best restorer of the fallen; the best antidote to wild and communistic theories, that undermine the foundations of truth and righteousness; the best peace society; the best international alliance; in a word, the best righter

of the wrongs that make "the still sad music of humanity." The Lord said in the synagogue of Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* To that mission we have now succeeded, and we are stirred to earnestness in its prosecution not more by the command, "Go preach," that comes to us from the Master behind us, than by the entreaty, "Come over and help us!" that rises from the miserable before us. Let us, then, gird ourselves for this honorable crusade; for in the proportion in which we succeed, sin and suffering will disappear from the midst of us.

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* Luke iv., 18, 19.

XII.

PAUL AT PHILIPPI.

Acts xvi., 12–40.

NEAPOLIS, at which Paul and his companions first landed on the shore of Europe, was a seaport on the border of Thrace, and from the remains of paved military roads, and of a great aqueduct yet existing in the neighborhood, it has been identified with the modern Cavallo. It stood on a small promontory, jutting out into a bay nearly opposite to, though about twelve miles distant from, the island of Thasos. Between it and Philippi, which was only eight miles off, the mountain ridge of Pangæus had to be crossed by a pass which has been described as "a miniature Thermopylæ."* The ascent begins almost as the traveller leaves the town; and when the summit is reached, an extensive sea-view is obtained; but as he descends on the opposite side he loses sight of the Ægean, and there opens up before him a vast plain, which has thus been described by the late Dr. Dwight of the American Mission: "When we arrived at the top of the mountain, the place where Paul must have had the first glance of the plain, and the city where he was to open the proclamation of the Gospel on European ground, I turned round to see what impression the spectacle might have made upon him, and truly a more inspiring prospect cannot well be fancied. The road is broad enough, and the hill so widening toward the plain, that a very large and rich

* Lewin, vol. i., p. 204.

part of the latter becomes visible at once, and the direction of the road is such as to throw the hill projecting, with the Acropolis on its summit and the city of Philippi at its base, right into the centre of the picture."*

The minute accuracy of the historian is once more illustrated by the words describing Philippi as "the first city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony." I have preferred, as you will observe, the marginal rendering, "the first," to the translation given in the text, "the chief;" and I have done so because the purpose of the narrator is to define the geographical position, and not the political importance of Philippi. He means to say that to one entering Macedonia from the Thracian frontier in that district, Philippi is the first city on his route. Thus he naturally accounts for the fact that here, as the earliest Macedonian centre on which Paul came, he began to respond to the cry for help which in his vision at Troas he had heard. The city itself was originally called Krenides, or the fountains, because of the number of springs in its vicinity. Subsequently it was known as Datus, or Datum; but when Philip of Macedon conquered the Thracians, he built a fortress on the site of its Acropolis, that he might have full command of the neighboring country, and called it after his own name, Philippi. In course of time it came into the hands of the Romans, and was brought into almost constant communication with the Imperial City by its situation on the great Egnatian road, whereby the East and the West were connected under that military system which has always been regarded as the perfection of organization. On the plain surrounding the city was fought that battle between Brutus and Cassius on the one side, and Anthony and Octavius on the other, which sealed the fate of the Roman republic, and prepared the

* Quoted in Kitto's "Daily Bible Illustrations," vol. viii., p. 377.

way for the assumption by Octavius, under the name of Augustus, of imperial power. In consequence of the victory then won by him, the city was greatly favored, and was made a Roman colony; but as that term had then a significance entirely different from the meaning which now belongs to it, we must be on our guard against falling into error regarding it. Among us the word designates a company of settlers in a new land, who still remain, in some sense, dependent on the mother country; but among the Romans it denoted a city which, though situated far away from Rome, was still regarded as only an extension of the great metropolis. The colonists, in the later days, were commonly either old soldiers or freedmen, who went forth like an army, and chose the site of their future abode, marking out its boundaries in a spirit which was as much religious as military; for the occasion was signalized by the observance of sacred rites as well as by martial display. They kept their places, however, on the roll of the citizens of Rome, were included in one or other of the tribes into which the burgesses of the metropolis were divided, and had the right of voting in the elections of its magistrates. In their new home they were under Roman law, and were governed by their own senate, and by magistrates who were known as Duumvirs, and not by the proprætor or proconsul of the province. The land on which their city stood, however, was liable to taxation, unless it were specially exempted, as Philippi was, by what was called the Jus Italicum. The colonists had the rights of Roman citizens, and had at all times the privilege of appeal from their own magistrates to the emperor himself.

Now, one cannot read the narrative which is to engage our attention in this discourse without perceiving that we are introduced into a state of things corresponding in every respect to that which I have just described. As Lightfoot has succinctly put it, "The political atmosphere of the place

is wholly Roman. The chief magistrates, more strictly duumvirs, arrogate to themselves the loftier title of prætors. Their servants, like the attendant officers of the highest functionaries in Rome, bear the name of lictors. The pride and privilege of Roman citizenship confront us at every turn. This is the sentiment which stimulates the blind loyalty of the people (Acts xvi., 21); this is the power which obtains redress for the prisoners, and forces an apology from the unwilling magistrates (Acts xvi., 37–39). Nor is this feature entirely lost sight of when we turn from St. Luke's narrative to St. Paul's Epistle. Addressing a Roman colony from the Roman metropolis, writing as a citizen to citizens, he recurs to the political franchise as an apt symbol of the higher privileges of their heavenly calling, to the political life as a suggestive metaphor for the duties of their Christian profession" (Phil. i., 27; iii., 20).*

In such a city, though the principal inhabitants were originally Romans, the population would gradually become mixed, as representatives of other nationalities gathered in to enjoy the advantages which it possessed. But whatever may have been the proportion of Greeks residing within its walls, there could not have been many Jews, for there is no mention of a synagogue. All that the descendants of Abraham were strong enough to sustain was what is called a "proseucha," or oratory, which was distinguished from more important places of worship by the slightness of its structure, and frequently, also, by the absence of a roof. That referred to in the history before us was outside of the city, probably for the purpose of securing retirement, and on the margin of a running stream named the Gangites, in which ceremonial ablutions might conveniently be made. The

* St. Paul's "Epistle to the Philippians," by J. B. Lightfoot, D.D., pp. 50, 51.

congregation which statedly assembled in it was very small, consisting chiefly, if not indeed entirely, of women; and even of them all were not of Jewish birth, for she who is specially mentioned was a proselytess. The absence of the husbands and brothers may perhaps be accounted for from their having become careless and remiss in their religious duties, when they were away from the associations and restraints of home; as, alas! is too frequently the case with many who leave Christian abodes in the country for the great city in our own days; or perhaps, like Eunice, the mother of Timothy, the women might be for the most part the wives of Gentile husbands, who, though not interfering with their religious worship, did not join them in their services.

According to his invariable practice of preaching to the Jew first, Paul sought out this secluded spot, and though he might, perhaps, have some little difficulty in finding it,* yet when the Sabbath came he and his companions made their way to the place. A lover of sensation or a craver for popularity might have been disappointed at the smallness of the congregation, and might have been tempted to give up all idea of preaching to such a handful of people. But while no man could make more of a great opportunity than the apostle Paul, none was ever less disposed to neglect what might seem to be a small one, and therefore he and his companions, after the usual devotional exercises, sat down and spake unto the women. At first all took part, but by-and-by the interest centred in the words of Paul. We are not told what he said, but we know full well what would be the theme of his discourse. Here, as everywhere else, Christ would be proclaimed by him not only as the Messiah promised to the fathers, but also as the Saviour of

* Lightfoot, as above, p. 51, prefers, in verse 13th here, the reading which gives the translation "where we supposed there was a place of prayer."

men from the guilt and power of sin. Every exposition of Scripture which he presented, every argument which he prosecuted, every illustration which he used, every appeal which he enforced, would lead up to him; and, as at Antioch, in Pisidia, he would sum up his message in the declaration that "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."* We know not what the results were in the case of all who heard him; but one was there who had occasion to remember that day through life, and who now in heaven looks back upon it as the beginning of her Christian life, for God touched and "opened her heart," that "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." She believed then and there, and having, with her household, been baptized, she so pressed her hospitality upon the strangers that, contrary to Paul's custom in other places, they took up their abode in her house. This was Lydia, a native not of Philippi, but of Thyatira, in Asia, and engaged in Philippi in the sale of that purple for the production of which her native city was famous.

During his sojourn under her roof, Paul seems to have been in the habit of frequenting the place where her conversion had occurred. Doubtless it afforded facilities for reaching the Jewish population, and promised to give him a basis of operations from which he might work with advantage upon the people as a whole. But his residence in the city was cut short by the performance of a miracle of mercy at his word. On his way to and from the place of prayer he had been frequently met by a female slave, who was the victim of demoniacal possession. She is here said to have been possessed by a spirit of Python, which was one of the

* Acts xiii., 38, 39.

names of the Apollo who had his shrine at Delphi, where his priestess gave to those who made application for them enigmatic responses, accompanied on her part with tearing of the hair and other manifestations of frantic fury. The historian employs the term current in the place; but Paul, as we shall see, treated it as a case of the same sort of possession as was so frequently met by the Saviour in his personal ministry. She was afflicted with no mere physical malady, like epilepsy or insanity; but there was, indeed, in her spirit an evil agent, one of the subordinates of the Prince of Darkness. As Trench has expressively described it, in his exposition of one of the Saviour's miracles, "There was a power in her which she, even in the moment of her succumbing to it, felt to be the contradiction of her truest being, but which yet forced itself upon her and possessed her, that she must needs speak and act as its organ, however presently her personal consciousness might reassert itself for a moment;" and again, "Another was ruling in the high places of her soul, and had cast down the rightful Lord from his seat, and she knew this."* It was a malady of a strangely complex kind, having on one side of it some striking resemblances to purely physical diseases, and on another seeming to me to be (shall I dare to say it?) the devil's caricature and travesty of that indwelling of the Holy Ghost which is the highest privilege of the devout believer. But, to borrow again from Trench: "He who came to destroy the works of the devil, as he showed himself lord over purely physical evil, a healer of diseases of men and lord over purely spiritual evil, a deliverer of men from their sins—manifested himself also lord in these complex cases partaking of the nature of either, ruler also in the border-land where these two regions of evil join, and run so strangely and unaccount-

* "Trench on the Miracles," pp. 160, 162.

ably into each other."* In this case, that which was a terrible calamity to the woman had been turned into a means of gain by her owners, who made a profit from her divinations as a fortune-teller. As in the days of the Redeemer's flesh the evil spirits recognized him, and called him the Son of the Most High God, so the demon in this poor slave became conscious of the relation of Paul to Christ, and kept calling after him and his companions, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." But the apostle, not wishing to have the Gospel degraded by such testimony, and filled at once with compassion for the slave and indignation at her masters, being moreover divinely directed, turned and said to the evil spirit, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her," and immediately she was delivered from her tormentor. But that which was to her a blessing was a sore blow to her owners; "for now the hope of their gains was gone," and so, raising a tumult, they laid hold of Paul and Silas, dragged them into the forum before the magistrates, and brought this accusation against them: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."

We are struck with the selfishness of these men. They had no joy at the relief of the slave from her oppressor, for they were overwhelmed with grief at the loss of their dividends. So the rum-sellers anathematize all movements in the direction of temperance. So the traders in heathen lands denounce the missionaries. So the padrones curse the men who take the poor Italian boys from their cruel bondage. Touch a man's pocket, and very frequently you touch the only sensitive spot he has about him.

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* "Trench on the Miracles," p. 161.

But the cunning of these men was equal to their selfishness. They put in the fore-front of their accusation the nationality of the missionaries—"these men, *being Jews*." Why? Because the Jew was everywhere looked down upon for his exclusiveness, and hated for his commercial success. Perhaps, also, because just at this time the Jews had fallen into disgrace with Claudius, and had been banished from the metropolis; so that, in a colony like Philippi, which was only a little Rome in Macedonia, they were likely to be very summarily treated. Thus their adversaries brought the full force of prejudice to bear upon the missionaries, and wished to draw attention away from the merits of the case.

Moreover, it is impossible to shut one's eyes to their hypocrisy. They object to Paul and Silas because they taught customs which it was not lawful for Roman citizens to receive and observe; but they said not a word about the healing of their slave. Thus, often the alleged ground of offence with a man is different from the real one. In Ephesus, when Paul was there, the silversmiths met in secret conclave and whispered one to another—for Demetrius only spoke aloud what every one had already said or thought—"Ye know that this our craft is in danger," and "by this craft we have our wealth;" but when they came out into the theatre they made no reference to their gainful trade, but shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" And in our own day we have seen immense professions of zeal for some sacred duty, or for some department of benevolence, or for the purity of public morals, made by those whose real motive was to secure their own possession of some lucrative office. When a man is to be hunted down, it is usually not difficult for his enemies to find a pretext for sending the blood-hounds on his track; and those who on ordinary occasions care nothing for religion, will become all at once very earnest in its behalf when they imagine that thereby they can get rid

of an antagonist. Whenever you hear worldly men talk largely about their concern for the honor of the Church, you may expect to see them make one of the meanest and most malignant attacks on some Christian man. "When the serpent straightens itself," says the Spanish proverb, "it is about to go into its hole;" and when the selfish man begins to speak about the necessity of benevolence, he is on the way to the perfecting of some scheme for the advancement of his own interests.

But the mob in every age has been easily led by the plausible sayings of those who know how to manipulate it, and the appeal made by the slave-masters to the people so wrought upon their prejudices as to create an excitement before which all the forms of law were thrown down, and the magistrates became themselves the ringleaders, for "they rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat Paul and Silas." Nay, not content with offering this violence, they "cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely."

That functionary, willing to carry out his instructions with the utmost rigor, thrust his prisoners into the inner dungeon, and fastened their feet in an instrument which was used only to torture the vilest malefactors. The cell in which he confined them was not like that of one of our modern jails, but resembled rather such a damp, dark dungeon as we sometimes see among the ruins of a feudal castle in the Old World. It was a pestilential place, from which the light was excluded, and in which the chains rusted on the prisoners' limbs, while the *nervus*, or stocks, was a frame made sometimes of wood, sometimes of iron, with holes into which the legs, and occasionally also the arms and even the neck of the unfortunate victim, were stretched and confined. Think, then, of these two noble men, with their feet shackled, and their backs all bleeding from the blows

of the lictors' rods, consigned to a close, cold, dismal den, fitter for a wild beast's lair than the abode of human beings, and you will have some idea of what Paul means when, writing to the Thessalonians, he speaks of his "being shamefully treated at Philippi."*

But they were not dejected or in despair. We could have understood and made allowance for some little despondency in them, considering the trials to which they had been subjected, but, so far from being dispirited, they addressed themselves with calm cheerfulness to God. "At midnight praying, they sang praises unto God," for so the words are. Their prayers took the form of praises, or like those of David, from whom their hymns were most probably taken, their song, beginning in a minor key, swelled gradually up to exulting praise.

> "In that hour when night is calmest
> Sang they from the Hebrew Psalmist."

What would we have given to know which odes they chanted in that dreary place? Did they console themselves with such a strain as this: "The Lord looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death."† Or was it thus they sung: "The Lord executeth judgment for the oppressed. The Lord looseth the prisoners."‡ Or did they call to mind that beautiful section of the thanksgiving Psalm, "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron. . . . Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the

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* Thess. ii., 2. † Psa. cii., 19, 20. ‡ Psa. cxlvi., 7.

Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder."* We cannot tell. We know only that while they were singing, and their fellow-prisoners were listening to their psalm, an earthquake caused the prison to shake, and every man's bands were loosed. Startled by this terrible occurrence, the keeper came to look after his charge, and, finding the doors open, he forthwith concluded that the prisoners had escaped. Had that been really the case, he would have been put to death, and therefore, desiring to evade the disgrace of a public execution, he was about to kill himself with his own sword, when Paul cried out to him in a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Then calling for a light he sprang in, trembling and astonished, and fell at the feet of the two men of God, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Some have affirmed that the salvation of which he spoke was merely deliverance from punishment at the hands of the magistrates. But that cannot be, for he already knew that all the prisoners were safe, and therefore he had nothing to fear from his earthly superiors. His words can refer only to that spiritual danger which he now saw before him, and Paul, fully comprehending his meaning, made reply: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Perhaps he had already heard a good deal about Jesus, either from the missionaries themselves, or from the reports given by others of what they had said. But if he had not, Paul would set Christ fully before him, and preach the Gospel to him in such a form that he could intelligently lay hold of it. Indeed, we are expressly told that they spake the word of the Lord to all that were

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* Psa. cvii., 10, 13–16.

in his house; and the result was that he and his believed and were baptized, most probably at the fountain in the court-yard of the prison, at which, also, he tenderly washed the stripes of his now honored instructors. Then, bringing them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced with such heartiness that Paul and Silas for the time forgot their sufferings in their discovery of the reason why God had permitted such things to be inflicted on them.

When the morning came, the magistrates finding, after the night's reflection, that they had been guilty of injustice, and desiring to get out of a difficulty as quietly as possible, sent to the jailer to let them go; but Paul would not endure such indignity without protest. In the confusion of the previous day, he had either not been able to declare that he was a Roman citizen, or, owing to the tumult made in the forum, his words had not been heard. Now, however, he was minded to stand upon his prerogative. Therefore he replied, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out." Every word here is emphatic, and brings out some special aggravation in the outrage of which the magistrates had been guilty. The sentence, as a whole, is a most formidable indictment, and was well fitted to strike terror into the hearts of the rulers. These magic words, "I am a Roman citizen!" according to Cicero, brought aid and safety even among barbarians in the remotest parts of the world; and there was nothing which was more sacredly guarded throughout the empire than the privileges which belonged to every one who had a right to use them. One of the most eloquent speeches of the great orator whom I have just named, was powerless to secure the acquittal of a governor under whose administration these rights had been infringed. We can understand, therefore,

how the words of Paul alarmed the Philippian magistrates, and how in fawning politeness they came and besought him and his companion to leave the city. The admission of their error was all that the apostle in this case cared for; and therefore, after having paid a hasty visit to Lydia, and given some counsels and comforts to the brethren whom he had been instrumental in leading to the Saviour, he left for Thessalonica.

His visit to Philippi had been brief, but the friendships made there were among the truest and most delightful of Paul's life; for when we read his letter to the members of the church in that city, written perhaps ten years later, we shall find that he addresses them in more endearing terms than he uses to any other correspondents. He could always depend on their loyalty to him. They are his "dearly beloved, his joy and crown." He would receive nothing from the men of Corinth or of Ephesus for his services, but he prized the supplies which were sent to him from Philippi. The Christians there lay nearest to his heart, and received his most sacred experiences in the confidence of his affection. His tone to them is as kindly as it is to Timothy; nor need we wonder at all this, for the friendship which has been cemented in the fire of trial endures through all other emergencies.

I have time for only one or two practical inferences from this whole narrative.

We have here set before us, in the first place, the two agencies in conversion. On the human side we see the truth as it is in Jesus presented to the mind, and attended to and believed by the heart. This is the only means whereby a sinner can be saved. Error will not convert the soul. Neither will the truth about other subjects than the Gospel regenerate the heart. That which science teaches about the earth, the heavenly bodies, and the various objects to which its at-

tention is directed, may be all true, and it is all-important in its own place; but its reception does not produce any change upon the moral and spiritual nature of the man. Nothing but "the truth as it is in Jesus" can do anything like that; and accordingly, in all the histories of conversion which the Bible contains, we find that the preaching of the Gospel in some form or other was the instrument by which they were accomplished. On the Day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed the forgiveness of sins through the crucified but risen and reigning Christ. In the household of Cornelius the same apostle told of Jesus and his work, in words whereby the centurion and his house were saved. Philip preached the atonement to the Ethiopian treasurer, and here both to Lydia and the jailer Paul rehearsed that which has now become "the old, old story," but was then the new and startling history "of Jesus and his love." Understand, therefore, that it is only through the intelligent belief of the Gospel, not simply as a statement of facts, but also and especially as good news having a direct and personal bearing on the individual himself, that the soul is converted. Some four years ago, as I was leaving this house on a Sabbath morning after service, I was waited upon by a young man whom I had known in the Old Country. He told me that he had quarrelled with his father, and had come off here to be his own master. He wanted guidance and assistance. I spoke to him a few earnest words, and appointed him a day on which he should come to my house, when I should see what I could do for him. The day came and went, but he did not make his appearance, and I began to fear that he had fallen into evil company; but before the week was out he called upon me, so changed in appearance that I hardly recognized him. The despondency, mingled with defiance, had gone out of his face, and he seemed bright and happy. I asked why he had not kept his appointment, and he replied,

"Because I have a letter from my father forgiving me, and beseeching me to return. I feel I must go back; yet I wanted to see Niagara first, and I ran up there knowing that I could come to you again; but I am going to sail to-morrow for home, for I must go back, I must go back!" The youth believed his father's word, and returned to his father's house. So it is here. The Gospel is God's letter to the self-exiled sinner entreating him to return, and promising him forgiveness. When a sinner recognizes that the letter is addressed to him personally, and goes back—that is a conversion. It is taking God's word as addressed to you, counting it true, and acting according. That is the human side.

But on the divine side God opens the heart to attend to the Gospel. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore, in every conversion there is a concurrence of the divine agency with the human instrumentality. But when we ask how the spirit of God thus operates directly on the heart, we find ourselves at once in a region that is beyond our ken. All we know is comprised in these statements, namely, that the work of the Holy Ghost on the heart is not an object of its consciousness, as distinct from the ordinary operations of what we call its own faculties; that it does not reveal to the heart any new truths not already in the Gospel; that it does not confer any new powers upon the soul; and that it does no violence to our own free agency, being exerted in a way that is perfectly in harmony with the spiritual constitution which God has given us. All these things are perfectly clear from the two cases which have been to-night before us, and they are attested by the experience of every believer among us. But farther than this we cannot go. The upshot of the whole matter may be given in the following propositions: In the conversion of the soul God has his

work, and we have ours; as we cannot do God's work, God will not do ours; therefore the necessity of the divine agency does not absolve us from the responsibility of employing the human; and when we seek to do our part, we shall find that God has already performed his. When, at the bidding of Jesus, the man willed and attempted to stretch out his withered arm, he found that the strength to do so had already been imparted; and when we will to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall discover that the Lord has anticipated us by the opening of our hearts. There is here, therefore, no reason whatever for "waiting for the spirit," as many phrase it, but every reason for immediately complying with God's pressing and personal command. God cannot save you unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and when you have believed, though you cannot unravel the metaphysics of the case, you will yourself be the first to acknowledge that you have done so because the Lord opened your heart.

We have here, in the second place, the federal unity of the household in its head. We too frequently misquote Paul's command to the jailer by leaving out the last three words, "and thy house." But this ought not to be lost sight of by us. It is customary to refer to the baptism of these two households as confirmatory of the practice of infant baptism; and unquestionably, whether there were infants in either of them or not, it has its weight in that particular, though for myself I am more disposed to rest on the identity of the Church of God through all the dispensations—Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Christian—the sign of initiation only being changed. But what I want to bring out now is, that the household is dealt with as a unit on the faith of its head. Jesus said to Zacchæus, "This day is salvation come to this house;" and Paul said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,

and thy house." The conversion of the head of a household sanctifies the household, and must have, cannot but have, an effect on all its members. It brings them in a very true sense into the kingdom, for where the head of the household goes he takes the household with him. When I was called from Liverpool to take the pastorate of this church, my acceptance of that call transferred my household to this land; and, similarly, when a parent is effectually called by God's spirit so that he enters the Church, he brings his household with him. He is not really converted if he do not. We all recognize that, whether we baptize infants or not; though to me infant baptism is a beautiful seal of the family unity, and stands intimately related to the fact that the family is regarded as God's ordinance for the training of its members for Christ. I know our Baptist brethren admit that as really as we do. Yet we are all too apt to forget in practice what we assent to in theory, and I am therefore disposed to emphasize, in connection with these conversions, the importance of the household as a school for Christ. Has salvation come through our faith to our families? that is the question which rises out of Paul's command to the jailer, and I could wish to press it home to the heart of every parent in the audience; for if our piety has no influence in the household, it may be doubted whether it is piety at all.

Finally, we have here an illustration of the sustaining power of faith in Jesus Christ. Paul and Silas sung at midnight in the prison, though they were loaded with fetters and writhing in pain. They had "meat to eat" of which their adversaries knew not; and the happiness of their hearts was such that they could not choose but give it utterance in praise. Nor is this a solitary instance in the history of the Christian Church. I think of the gentle Anne Askew writing, on the night before her execution, that exquisite lyric in which these words occur:

"I am not she that list
Her anchor to let fall
For every drizzling mist;
My ship's substantial."

I think of the good Lord William Russell winding up his watch for the last time on the eve of his execution, and saying, "There! I have done with time! now eternity comes." I think of that scene in the life of the noble Argyle portrayed on one of the frescoes in the corridor of the House of Lords in London, and so graphically described by the pen of Macaulay, when he lay in his last sleep as calm and peaceful as a child, and by the very placidness of his repose struck remorse into the heart of the traitor who had betrayed him into the hands of his enemies; and as I pass all these in review before me, I am constrained to say, "*The Word of the Lord is tried!*" The promise that could bear the strain of such trials is enough for me. The cable that stood the storms to which these holy ones were exposed will not snap in my extremity. The Lord, who was with them, will be with me; and what they have *tested* I may *trust.* So let us go forth to-night with stronger confidence than ever in the grand old promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

XIII.

THESSALONICA AND BEREA.

ACTS xvii., 1–14.

THE first thing to be noted in this section of the history is, that we have here again a change in the personal pronoun used by the writer. From the tenth verse of the sixteenth chapter on to the fortieth, Luke includes himself with Paul and his companions in the "we" which he employs; but now that the missionary band leave Philippi, he returns to the third person "they;" and it is not until we come to the sixth verse of the twentieth chapter, when, some years after, Paul was leaving Philippi for Troas on his way to Jerusalem, that the first person is resumed. It is possible, therefore, that the evangelist remained during the entire interval at Philippi, though there is no absolute certainty attainable in the matter; but if he did continue so long there, then we can the better understand how, under his influence, the Christians of that city came to be so thoughtful of the comfort of the apostle.

Not less interesting to the intelligent student is the accuracy of the order in which Luke names the places passed by the travellers in their journey from Philippi to Thessalonica. The route lay along the Egnatian way, to which we have already referred, and in the ancient guide-books the distances are given thus: Philippi to Amphipolis, thirty-three miles; Amphipolis to Apollonia, thirty miles; Apollonia to Thessalonica, thirty-seven miles. Perhaps the intervening

towns had no Jewish population among whom Paul could find, as it were, a fulcrum for the lever which he loved to use, and so he pushed on to Thessalonica. That city stood at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. It was originally called Therma, but being rebuilt and embellished by Cassander, it was named by him Thessalonica, in honor of his wife, who was a sister of Alexander the Great, and, in its corrupted form Saloniki, that name continues till this day. Under the Roman Republic it was the capital of one of the four districts into which Macedonia was divided; and after the victory won by Anthony and Octavius at Philippi, it received from the conquerors the privileges of a free city. From its excellent maritime position, it was from the first an important seaport; and in the days of the apostle it was a centre in which men from many quarters met, as they do in Liverpool or New York, and from which, therefore, the Gospel might radiate in almost all directions. Probably his perception of this centrifugal influence was one of the things which led Paul to choose it at this time as a field of labor, and if that was so, the result did not disappoint his expectations; for not long after his visit to the city we find him writing to the converts whom he had left behind him there, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad."*

Its commercial eminence attracted many Jews to its site, and, indeed, at this day, out of a population of from 70,000 to 80,000, there are more than 50,000 Israelites. Naturally, therefore, there would be many synagogues; but there was one of these, apparently, more prominent than the rest—for in the original it is emphatically designated *the* synagogue —and to that, according to his custom of preaching "to the

* 1 Thess. i., 8.

Jew first," Paul went and proclaimed the message which he brought.

We have had occasion already to remark how the apostle adapted his presentation of the Gospel to the stand-point occupied by his hearers. Among the heathen at Lystra, he stood on the ground of what is commonly known as natural religion, and reasoned up to "the living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all things that are therein;" and, as we shall see in our next discourse, he followed the same course when he was addressing the men of Athens. But when he was in the synagogues of the Jews, he reasoned with men out of the Old Testament Scriptures, for those whom he there addressed already admitted the inspiration and authority of the books of Moses and the prophets. In every argument which we have with another there must be some proposition laid down to which both parties agree, else we never can come to a satisfactory conclusion. In the language of logicians, this mutually admitted statement is called the major premise of the syllogism, and the effort of the reasoner is put forth to show that the conceding of that, to which both alike assent, involves in it also the yielding up of the matter which is still in debate. Now, from the description here given, we find that Paul took it for granted that his Jewish hearers would accept what could be fairly deduced from their own Scriptures. They reverenced these writings equally with himself. They believed, as truly as he did, that the prophets foretold the coming of the Christ, and described the manner of his appearance and the purpose of his advent. Hence, as the foundation principle of his argument with them, we have always this proposition implied: He who shall perfectly answer to the ancient prophecies concerning Messiah must be accepted by us as the Messiah. Now, in proceeding along this line, it was essential that he should expound what the

Messianic prophecies really meant; and in doing that he was very particular to show that "the Christ"* is delineated in the Old Testament as one who was to "suffer and rise again from the dead." That, indeed, was the very opposite of the common Jewish notion; for, unable to reconcile the two apparently inconsistent descriptions of Messiah which they found in their Scriptures, the one depicting a mighty conqueror, and the other portraying "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" or perhaps taken up exclusively with the former of these, and enamored of its brightness, they ignored altogether the latter, and expected their deliverer as a temporal prince. For that reason Paul gave prominence to the truth that in the Old Testament the Christ is described as one who was to suffer, and to rise from the grave. The first portion of his discourse, therefore, would be expository, and would consist in a presentation and explanation of the Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures. We are not told what those passages were on which he laid the greatest stress, but, judging from the line of remark which he adopted in Antioch of Pisidia, we may suppose that he referred again to the sixteenth Psalm, and showed that it could not be applied to David, but must be regarded as pointing to one who should be laid in the grave, and yet not allowed to see corruption; or, taking up the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, he might point out how in the earlier portion of that marvellous section of prophecy Messiah is spoken of as a sufferer, and in the later he is portrayed as a conqueror, an order and mode of delineation which is consistent only with a submission to death, and a subsequent triumph over the grave. We who have been so long accustomed to read the Old Testament

* The original has the article, and the meaning is better brought out by rendering "the Christ," or "the Messiah."

in the light of the New can scarcely understand how any mistake could have arisen among the Jews upon this subject; yet it is perfectly plain that they never for a moment imagined that their Messiah was to be crucified. The cross was their great stumbling-block; and it was so because they read only one class of prophecies. They looked only at one side of the shield. They were so dazzled with the splendor of Messiah's royalty, that they lost sight both of the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and of the terrible humiliation through which he was to pass to his throne. We may be sure, therefore, that, with the rolls of the ancient Scriptures spread out before him, and verifying from them every statement which he made, Paul would spend much of his strength on this first portion of his address, wherein he showed that the Christ was to be a sufferer, and was to rise from the dead.

The second branch of his argument was historical, and was designed to prove that the person and life and work of Jesus of Nazareth fitted into and fulfilled the predictions of the prophets concerning the Christ. Here it is probable that he would dwell on the birthplace, lineage, and work of Jesus, setting before his hearers that marvellous twofoldness in his history which corresponds so perfectly to the mystic dualism—if I may call it so—which he had already exhibited in the delineations of the Messiah given by the prophets.

Never were contrasts more startling in a life than those which are to be found in that of the Son of Mary. He lay, a helpless infant, on his mother's knee; yet shepherds, having received an angelic message, came to worship him as the Saviour, Christ—the Lord. He received gifts from the Magi, who came from far to do him honor; yet he was compelled to flee into a foreign land from the cruelty of Herod. At his baptism a voice from the excellent glory greeted him

as God's beloved son, yet that was followed by a fierce encounter with the Prince of Darkness. He fed the multitudes upon the mountain-side with heavenly bounty; yet, with a pathos which is tenderer than tears, he said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He died on a cross of agony and shame, and was beholden to charity for a grave; yet, on the third day, he came forth from the sealed and guarded sepulchre to say, with even stronger emphasis than at the tomb of Lazarus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "Now," we may suppose that Paul would argue, "beware of committing the same mistake with this history which you have committed with the prophecies which foretold it. Take it as a whole. Regard it not as composed of two irreconcilable portions, one of which must be conclusively set aside, but as a unit, and see the explanation of the apparent enigma in the fact that he in whom these contradictions met is the Messiah, the God-man, who came to bear our sins and carry our sorrows; and who, having died for our offences, has risen again for our justification. I have shown you that the Christ of prophecy must needs suffer and rise. Here in history is Jesus of Nazareth, who has suffered death and risen from the grave; must not, therefore, your belief in the sacred oracles lead you to belief in him as the Messiah of God?"

As the result of this argument, maintained in the synagogue for three consecutive Sabbaths, some believed, and some believed not. Of the converts the greater number were from the Greek proselytes, and some were women of distinction in the city; but few of them, comparatively speaking, were pure Jews. I infer this, not only from the contrast between the "some," which refers to the Jews in the first clause of the fourth verse, and "the great multitude," which refers to the proselytes in the latter portion of the same verse, but

also from the distinction made between the Jews of Thessalonica and those of Berea in the eleventh verse; and from the fact that in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians the Church is described as so thoroughly Gentile in its character, that, if we had known nothing further about it than is there implied, we would hardly have supposed that any Jews were among its members. Hence I come to the further conclusion that Paul was some little time longer in Thessalonica than the three weeks of which alone mention is made in the narrative of Luke; and this seems to be confirmed by many incidental references in the two letters which he afterward sent to the Christians there. Finding, as I suppose, that no marked success was to be had among the Jews, he turned, as his custom was, unto the Gentiles, and was rewarded by the conversion of many to the faith; for he says, "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;"* and again, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."† It thus appears that a large proportion of the Thessalonian converts had come directly from idolatry; and therefore we must conclude that Paul's labors were not limited to those who frequented the synagogue. Further, we learn that his success among them greatly touched his heart, and brought out the full tenderness of his nature; for he says, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us;" and again, "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children."‡ Perhaps,

* 1 Thess. i., 5. † 1 Thess. i., 9. ‡ 1 Thess. ii., 7, 8, 11.

also, there is a reference to the antagonism which, after his first interviews with them, the Jews manifested toward him when he says, "We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."*

How much longer than the three weeks specified by Luke he actually remained in this important city we cannot tell, but he stayed long enough to receive two substantial gifts which were sent by the brethren from Philippi;† and in connection with our mention of that fact we are reminded of one feature of his self-sacrifice, which is again and again alluded to in his letters, and must on no account be overlooked by us. I allude to the circumstance that he absolutely refused to take anything from the Thessalonian converts for his support. He did this, not because he had no proper claim upon them, for he everywhere insists that he "that is taught in the word should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things;"‡ but because of certain peculiarities in their case which in his view made it expedient for him to forego that right. How, then, was he supported? He shall tell us himself: "Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God;" and again, "Yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you."§ We are to think, then, of our apostle working all day in his missionary enterprise, and then toiling far into the night making the tent-cloth for which his native city was famous, in order that he might obtain food and raiment. Yet that he had no scruple about

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* 1 Thess. ii., 2. † Phil. iv., 15, 16. ‡ Gal. vi.
§ 1 Thess. ii., 9; 2 Thess. iii., 7, 8.

receiving from others, when he could do so without being misunderstood, is evident from the fact that he regarded the kindness of the Philippians to him at this very time with gratitude, and spoke of it as "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."*

How, then, shall we explain his rigid preservation of his own independence among the Thessalonians? The answer to this inquiry seems to me to be suggested by himself in the letters from which we have already so abundantly quoted; for we learn from them that there was among the converts in Thessalonica a disposition to neglect their work and live in idleness. Thus in one place he exhorts them to "study to be quiet, and to do their own business, and to work with their own hands;" and in another, in special connection with a reference to his own example, he says, "We made not ourselves chargeable unto you, to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us; for even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."† For the sake, therefore, of these sinful and misguided ones, and in order that, so far from encouraging them by his apparent dependence on others, he might sharply reprove them by his conduct, he wrought at his trade for his support. What an insight does this give us into the wisdom and self-sacrifice of our apostle? His one aim was to preach the Gospel; and no labor was too arduous, nor any self-denial too severe, if only he succeeded in advancing that cause to which he had given his life. He cared not for the world, or for the world's things. He could

* Phil. iv., 18.

† 1 Thess. iv., 11; 2 Thess. iii., 9–11.

say to all his hearers, "I seek not yours, but you." The only property he desired was property in human souls, saved and sanctified through his instrumentality, and to acquire that he would undergo any fatigue and endure any hardship. Like the good evangelist depicted by the immortal dreamer, Paul appeared before the Thessalonians, "having eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written on his lips, the world behind his back, and standing as if he pleaded with men."* Let every minister of Christ study this picture, and seek by God's grace to reproduce his undying activity and ungrudging self-sacrifice.

The great success which attended his labors among the Gentiles naturally exasperated the Jews, and, like their kinsmen in the Pisidian Antioch, they roused against him the violence of persecution. Leaguing themselves with the loungers in the market-place, and that low element of the population which in all large cities is at any moment ready for mischief, they gathered a mob, assaulted the house of Jason, in which Paul and Silas seem to have lodged, and sought to drag them out into the streets. But, baffled in their efforts to get hold of the missionaries, they took Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, saying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, and they all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king—one Jesus." Thus again, as at Philippi, another than the real cause of enmity is alleged by those who drag the servants of God to the judgment-seat. It was nothing wonderful that slave-masters in a Roman colony should have been zealous for Roman law, but that Jews should affect loyalty to Cæsar, and be concerned for the maintenance of his authority, was almost too ridiculous. Yet, because that was the sole ground on which

* Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

they could ask for the interference of the magistrates In a free city, they did not scruple to take it. The rulers seem to have understood pretty well how the matter lay; for, though they could not ignore such a charge, they showed their suspicion that it was not seriously made by being content to take bail of Jason and of the others, and then letting them go. This security, however, was not given for the production of Paul and Silas, nor even for the after-appearance of Jason and his companions before them, but either for their abstaining from everything that might seem to be treasonable, or for the peaceable conveyance of the strangers out of the city. At all events, under the cloud of night they did send away the two missionaries, who journeyed on to Berea. This town was fifty-one miles to the south-west of Thessalonica, and stood on low ground at the base of Mount Bermius, which was a part of the Olympian range. It was probably chosen by Paul at this time because it was not on the line of the Egnatian road, and so not quite so likely to be visited by those adversaries who had risen against them in Thessalonica.* But even here they were followed by the implacable enmity of their Jewish antagonists, though before they were interfered with they had the satisfaction of being useful to many souls; for, entering as usual into the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath, they found their kinsmen characterized by unwonted candor, and disposed to make earnest inquiry into the Scriptural foundation for the views which Paul advanced concerning the person, history,

* Lewin (vol. i., p. 236) quotes from Cicero a passage which is rather remarkable for its coincidences, as well as for its contrasts with the narrative of Luke. The orator is inveighing against Piso, whose base practices would not allow him to face the people, and he says, "You came to Thessalonica without the knowledge of any, and by night; and when you could not endure the laments of the mourners and the storm of complaints, you stole away to the secluded town of Berea."

and work of the Messiah. As the result of their examination, many of them believed, and, along with these Jews, a large number of proselytes, both male and female, were converted. It was a pleasant oasis for Paul and Silas; but they were not long permitted to enjoy its cooling waters and its palmy shade, for soon their Thessalonian enemies appeared, and, as Paul was the special object of their malice, the brethren sent him off to go, as it were, by the sea, keeping Timothy and Silas a little longer with themselves. While, therefore, the great apostle is proceeding to Athens, there to encounter human philosophy on its loftiest seat, let us pause for a time, and glean the lessons which this chapter of his history is calculated to enforce.

We are reminded, in the first place, that we must not abandon our work because of difficulties in its prosecution. I have wondered much, as I have gone over these two chapters of apostolic history, at the unfaltering courage and unfailing faith of Paul. Recall that vision which he beheld at Troas, when a man of Macedonia stood before him and prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us;" then observe how, from the time he came into Macedonia, he has been opposed and "shamefully entreated." At Philippi he was scourged and imprisoned, and his feet put into the stocks; at Thessalonica he was mobbed, and had to be secretly and by night conveyed out of the city; and again at Berea he was assailed by a rabble, instigated by those who had accused him in Thessalonica; yet there is no record of any questioning on his part of the wisdom or rightness of his course. We do not hear him saying, "Can it be that the Lord has sent me to this land, when I am driven thus from city to city? Would it not be better for me to return to those churches on the Asiatic shore, whose members were so devotedly attached to me." There were no such misgivings in his heart; there were no such

backward looks from his eyes. He had put his hand to the plough, and he would go through with the furrow. He would take no steps backward; and so, in spite of the antagonism which he had to encounter, he "bated not one jot of heart or hope, but still bore up, and steered right onward." He did not give up his commission because he had to fight; but he held on at his work, and even in the midst of his trials he did much that lived in permanent result. The Philippian Church had for many years a history of honor; and of Thessalonica it has been said by Howson that "No city which we have yet had occasion to describe has had so distinguished a Christian history, with the single exception of the Syrian Antioch. . . . It was the bulwark of Constantinople in the shock of the barbarians; and it held up the torch of truth to the successive tribes who overspread the country between the Danube and the Ægean—the Goths and the Sclaves, and the Bulgarians of the Greek Church, and the Wallachians, whose language still seems to connect them with Philippi and the Roman colonies. Thus in the mediæval chroniclers it has received the name of 'the orthodox city.'"* Let us learn from all this not to be discouraged in our work for Christ by any series of conflicts like those which came upon Paul in his first visit to Europe. Let us go on sowing the seed, if it should be on a battlefield. The Lord will take care of it, and make it spring up, and bring forth fruit which may be blessed for the support of those who shall come after us.

We are reminded, in the second place, that even the enemies of Christ's cause can hardly speak of it without suggesting valuable truth. When those who wagged their heads at the dying Redeemer as he hung upon the cross, said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," they thought not of

* Howson's "Life and Epistles," etc., vol. i., p. 347.

the blessed love which their words immediately bring before our thoughts, and from the strength of which within him alone it was true that he could not save himself. Similarly, when these Thessalonian Jews affirmed before the heathen magistrates that the Christians "had turned the world upside down," we cannot help feeling that, though there was exaggeration in the expression, yet it did bear testimony to the reality of the power which the Gospel had even then begun to exert, and to the nature of the influence which it was even then putting forth. They recognized that it was revolutionary in its character, and though they were wrong in imputing to its preachers treason against the government then existing in the empire, they were right in regarding it as calculated to transform human society, and change the character of the world as a whole. So far as selfishness, and slavery, and cruelty, and dishonesty, and impurity, and every other kind of iniquity are concerned, the Gospel is both radical and revolutionary. It lays the axe to the root of the tree of evil. It attacks the seat of the malady with which the race is afflicted. Its very purpose is to turn the world upside down, because by reason of human depravity the world is too largely wrong-side up. Hence, if we would reform family life, or regenerate society, or purify the nation, the great instrument for the accomplishment of these ends is the Gospel proclaimed by earnest, courageous, and self-sacrificing men.

Again, these Jews alleged that Paul and his companions did "contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus;" and in this case also, while false in the meaning which they were intended to convey, their words suggest to us thoughts of which they did not dream. Paul, as indeed we may gather from the tenor of his letters to the Thessalonians, had been speaking, doubtless, of Messiah as king, and of his coming again in his glory to take

vengeance on them who know not God; but with that literalism and externalism which were too characteristic of the Jews, they inferred that he was describing an earthly royalty, whereas he was depicting a spiritual sovereignty over the hearts and minds and consciences of men. In their ignorance or malice they accused him of disloyalty to the emperor; yet one may adopt their words, and spread over them other thoughts than they had in their minds. "There *is* another king, one Jesus." Monarchs reign, but their dominion is merely external. They do not and cannot enter into the realm of the soul; but "there is another king, one Jesus," whose right it is to sit enthroned in every heart, to direct every conscience, and to have dominion over every thought and action. Have you given him the sovereignty of yourself?

Sin reigns, and that king, alas! holds sway in many—I ought to say, in the vast majority of human souls. But he is an usurper; for "there is another king, one Jesus," who is the rightful Lord of the heart. Under which king are you? He who repudiates the royalty of Jesus over him is guilty of treason against the majesty of Heaven, and is but courting his destruction.

Death reigns, and day by day he is sweeping in new multitudes into his silent realm. The mightiest and the meanest alike must yield to him who is the terror of kings, no less than he is the king of terrors. At one time he rides on the hurricane, and dashes the laboring vessel and the freighted souls within her on the roaring reef; at another, he drives through the city streets riding on his pestilential car, and spreads desolation round him. Now he careers upon the boiling flood, and sweeps whole villages before him into swift destruction; and again he leaps in the lightning flash upon some devoted building, and kindles a conflagration that burns many in its flames. He laughs at men's ef-

forts to elude his grasp; and as we look upon the settled countenance of the loved one whom we are preparing to lay in the grave we are almost compelled to own him conqueror. But no! "there is another king, one Jesus," who is "the Resurrection and the Life," and "who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." Let us, then, be undismayed by this last enemy. He is a vanquished foe. Our Lord Jesus has gone into his domain, and having conquered him there, has brought him back with him to his palace, to be there the page who opens the door for his friends into the chamber of his presence. Yes! as we stand by the remains of our Christian dead, and under the influence of sight are moved to speak of Death as king, we recall in another sense than they were meant, but in a sense which faith recognizes as true, the words, "There is another king, one Jesus."

But we are reminded, finally, that the success of the Christian minister depends, under God, upon the spirit of his hearers, as really as upon the manner in which he presents the Gospel to them. It was the same Paul who preached in Thessalonica and Berea; yet only a few Jews were converted in the one city, and many were converted in the other. How shall we account for this difference in his success? The history explains it by the difference in the disposition of his hearers. The Thessalonians were prejudiced. The Bereans were ready to listen, and were willing to give due weight to that which was addressed to them. Above all, the Thessalonians were wedded to their old traditional interpretations of the Scriptures; but the Bereans were after the truth, and they searched the Old Testament daily to discover whether Paul's statements as to their contents were correct. "Therefore," says the inspired narrator, "many of them believed." Now, let us be instructed by the great power which lies in that "therefore." If we desire conver-

sions in our congregations, we must not only have ministers like Paul, but also hearers like the Bereans. The preacher should put himself behind the Bible, seeking simply and only to make its meaning plain. He should unfold its significance, and then point that straight at the consciences of his auditors, making them feel that it is not so much with him as with God who gave the Bible that they have to do; and the hearers should be stimulated and encouraged to test his statements by the Scriptures. The pulpit differs from the platform of the Lyceum in this, that it has the open Bible lying upon it, in token that the Scriptures are accepted as the ultimate standard of appeal, and that everything said is to be weighed in that "balance of the sanctuary." The preacher comes not to dilate on science, or to discourse on literature, or to declaim on politics, or to discuss the latest novelty in philosophy. His work in the pulpit is to preach Christ by the faithful exposition of the Word of God; and not until his people become imbued with his love of the Bible, and are led by his suggestive utterances to examine it for themselves and test his sayings by its standard, can he hope for results that shall be at once encouraging and permanent. This is what I live for among you; and if I shall accomplish nothing else, I shall be thankful to have it said truly concerning me at last, "He gave us new reverence for the Bible; he taught us how to understand its meaning, and how to apply its principles to our common lives; he brought it home to our hearts, and gave us a new relish for its study." The man of one book is always formidable; but when that one book is the Bible, he is irresistible.

XIV.

ATHENS.

Acts xvii., 16–34.

IN consequence of the appearance of the Thessalonian Jews at Berea, the new converts there persuaded Paul to go to the shore, and take ship thence to Athens; so that now for the first time in his missionary travels he was without human companionship. Silas remained at Berea, but, from a statement made in the first letter to the Thessalonians,* we gather that Timothy had been sent back to Thessalonica to "establish the brethren there, and comfort them concerning their faith." For the time, therefore, the evangelistic band was broken up into units. Luke was at Philippi, Timothy at Thessalonica, and Silas at Berea, while Paul was going forward alone to Athens, to come there into direct and immediate conflict with human philosophy, even in its central stronghold. Perhaps no portion of apostolic history is more interesting to the intelligent reader than that which lies before us this evening for exposition; and whether we consider the place, the parties, the interview, or the results which followed from the conference, we shall find abundant matter for profitable reflection.

The place was Athens—the intellectual metropolis of the ancient world—the "mother of arts and eloquence." Beautiful for situation, that fair city stood on a plain hemmed in behind by a battlement of hills. In the middle of the plain,

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* 1 Thess. iii., 2.

and in the city itself, a ragged rock rose sheer and high. This rock was the Acropolis, which was crowned with the famous temples of the Parthenon and Erechtheum, and had on a site between these a colossal image of Minerva in full armor, the helmet and spear of which were ever the first objects visible to the mariner as he approached on the Ægean. West of that was a smaller eminence, on the top of which the Council met, and where the steps by which its members ascended, and the benches, hewn out of the virgin rock, on which they sat, may still be seen. This was called Areopagus, or Mar's Hill, from a temple to Mars which was built upon it. To the south of the Areopagus was the hill of the Muses, and to its west was that called Pnyx, on which the popular assemblies, in the great days of the republic, used to be held, and where Demosthenes spoke those noble orations which

"Fulmin'd over Greece
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne."

In the space between these hills was the Agora, or market-place. "The original city was built, for security, on the Acropolis, and the country people used to bring their products for sale to the foot of the rock on the western side, where was the ascent. This undercliff, accordingly, became the market. But in course of time, as the city grew, the population flowed over from the heights into the plain below, and streets began to be formed there. The part first occupied was called the market, and hence the new town was itself called the Agora, or market. Eventually the whole hollow between the Acropolis and the Areopagus on the north, the Pnyx on the west, and the hill of the Muses on the south, became populous, and was all known by the name of Agora."*

* Lewin, vol. i., pp. 243, 244.

Perhaps on no other area of similar extent on the surface of the world have so many objects of interest ever been collected as were to be seen of old on that Athenian plain. Wherever one might look, the finest productions of the painter's and the sculptor's art were challenging admiration and awakening delight; and not unfrequently some stirring historical association added its own peculiar heart-thrill to the pleasure felt by the spectator in the contemplation of the beautiful. Statues to its worthiest sons had been erected in all quarters of the city; paintings illustrating the most memorable victories in Athenian history were to be seen in many of the public porticoes; and the finest architectural effects were produced by the multitudinous temples which surrounded the beholder.

Here, too, was the home of philosophy. In these streets Socrates, "whom, well-inspired, the oracle pronounced wisest of men," had been a daily teacher throughout his life, and on yonder Areopagus he was condemned to die. In that olive grove, by the banks of the Cephissus, Plato founded his Academy; while in the Lyceum, near the murmuring Ilissus, the immortal Stagirite inaugurated his Peripatetic School. There was the garden in which Epicurus met his followers; and there the painted porch where Zeno and his disciples used to carry on their disputations. Here were the very highest places of human wisdom; the very perfection of human art; the very centre of human culture; and yet, after all, how little those material splendors and that mental training seemed to affect the moral and spiritual condition of the people! for they were sunk in superstition and impurity. "It must be acknowledged," says one who may be accepted as an impartial witness, "with whatever reluctance, by all who will not play fast and loose with facts, that a baser side of literature and of life has often been turned toward us in the very centres of ancient and modern

civilization. In the most brilliant period of Athenian greatness, when art had reached its acme of noble simplicity, when poetry and oratory shed over the public life a glowing atmosphere of grace and beauty, when intellect, unrivalled in force and subtlety, discussed questions which men are debating still, evils which are not so much as named among ourselves were sapping the very foundations of social order, and were made by men whose own personal purity is above suspicion the subject of jest and witticism."* Men tell us that the world is to be elevated by culture, and turn away from the Gospel as a vulgar thing; but let them look below the surface of the Athens which Paul visited, or the Rome which Nero ruled; let them study the Italy of Leo X. and the France of Louis XIV., and they will find that art, literature, philosophy, æsthetics, may all be cultivated to the highest extent, while morally the heart is a cage of unclean beasts, and socially the community is reeking with rottenness. So true it is that "the world by wisdom knows not God."

It was a bold thing for Paul to go into such a place as Athens; but he was there in God's providence, and he could depend on his help. It almost seems, indeed, as if it had formed no part of his original plan to labor there. His eye was fixed on Corinth, as being, by its central position and commercial eminence, a more available place for his purpose; and perhaps, also, he might suppose that the spirit of the Athenians was not quite so favorable for the reception of the Gospel as was that of those who made fewer pretensions to intellectual wisdom. But whatever had been his intentions, he did not begin his work immediately on his arrival. Before he spoke to the people he thought it wise to study them, and, if possible, to understand them. As he

* "St. Paul at Athens," by Charles Shakspeare, B.A., p. 38.

passed from street to street, the one thing which most profoundly moved him was the evidence of the prevalence of idolatry which met him at every turning. I do not suppose, indeed, that the apostle was destitute of the sense of beauty, but in him that was subordinated both to the good and the true; and his knowledge of the evils with which much of the sculpture round him was associated, as well as his loyalty to those two truths which Judaism alone had conserved in the world—namely, the unity and spirituality of God—kept him from losing sight of the degradation of which, splendid as they were, these works of art were but the symptoms. The city was in truth "full of idols." This is no mere rhetorical exaggeration, but literal fact. One ancient writer has said, "On every side there are idols, images, and temples;" and a wit, in the degenerate days of the city, somewhat caustically remarked, that "at Athens it was easier to find a god than a man." We need not wonder, therefore, that at the sight of all this Paul was unable to keep from preaching Christ, though at first he appears to have resolved to remain silent. Depressed, perhaps, by his solitude—for he was keenly alive to the influence of companionship upon him—or possibly a little discouraged by the persecutions to which he had been recently exposed, he might be saying within himself, like Jeremiah, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name;" but when he saw the condition of the city, he felt like the same prophet when he declared, "His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."*

Ah! how like Athens are our modern cities; and yet how quietly we take it! Multitudes are bowing at the shrine of the golden calf, making money the chief end they seek.

* Jer. xx., 9.

Many are doing homage in the temple of Fame, accounting a niche in that the highest glory of existence; thousands more are wallowing in the mire of sensuality, whose worship to-day is as degrading as was that of the ancient Astarte; while at every street corner there is a fane erected to Bacchus, whose devotees are as noisy and debased as those who followed the mythic Silenus astride upon his wine-skin. But where are the Pauls? where are the spirits stirred into activity by the sight of the wretchedness that reigns around? Let us thank God there are some, and, as it seems to me, their number is increasing; but there are too many among us, calling themselves, too, by the name of Christ, who let the black tide of sin and misery roll past them without one thought of rescuing a single victim from the waves, or doing anything to dry up the waters.

True to his general principle of action, Paul began in Athens with his Jewish kinsmen. He made his way to the synagogue, and entered into earnest argument with those who worshipped in it; but as nothing is said of results, the probability is that he had no great success. So, turning from his countrymen, he went into the Agora, and disputed with those whom he found loitering there. For such street colloquies the Athenians, as a people, had particular liking. It was through such public discussions that their great philosophers had come into prominence; and, having abundant leisure on their hands, the citizens generally found both occupation and excitement in listening to or taking part in the debates which were thus carried on. For this kind of thing, too, Paul was admirably fitted. In Tarsus, as the seat of a Greek university, he must have come in contact with many inquirers similar to those whom he now encountered at Athens; and we may see, from the ready responses to objections, the rapid transitions, the quick turns of thought, the argumentative fire, and vivid

flashes of eloquence in which his letters abound, how thoroughly furnished he was for this Socratic sort of discourse.

Among those whom he thus encountered were certain of the Epicureans and Stoics. The former of these schools derived their name from Epicurus, who lived and taught in Athens for thirty years, beginning with the date B.C. 306,* and whose philosophy bears a striking resemblance to much that is taught under the same name to-day. He held that the great end of life was the pursuit of happiness, and though in his own idea and example that happiness was sought for, not in animal indulgence, but in the practice of virtue and the possession of moral excellence, yet he made the man a centre to himself, and turned his thoughts upon his own enjoyment. The result was that, in the vast majority of instances, this doctrine led to the grossest kind of sensual gratification. Thus, as Mr. Lecky has put it, "It is impossible to doubt that Epicureanism was logically compatible with a very high degree of virtue. It is equally impossible to doubt that its practical tendency is to vice." Commonly, the ultimate significance that comes to be associated with a word is a clear indication of the character and tendency of the thing which it denotes; and therefore the ideas which the term Epicurean now suggests are the very strongest condemnation of the system which it designates.

This selfishness in morals was connected with a theory of the universe which was virtually materialistic. Borrowing from earlier teachers, Epicurus held that the universe is the result of "a fortuitous combination of atoms." He knew nothing of creation or a Creator; and though he did not deny the national gods, he virtually ignored them. There was no place in his system for the causation and superintendence

* Mr. Shakspeare, in his work already quoted, dates the coming of Epicurus to Athens at B.C. 323.

of spirit; and so, while not caring to defy public sentiment so far as to declare himself an atheist, he yet took back with one hand what he gave with the other; for he represented these deities as dwelling apart in serene indifference, having no influence on the guidance of the universe, even as they had no hand in its origin. As in his system there was no Creator, so there was no moral governor; and all ideas of retribution or judgment to come were inconsistent with his creed. Denying all immortality, his followers said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." How closely allied these opinions are to some modern speculations must be patent to every one who is familiar with the currents of modern thought. The perception of this resemblance is fitted to humble human pride, inasmuch as it shows that, in spite of the boasted scientific progress of these days, they who reject the Scriptures among us are, in so far as the great central problems are concerned, no farther advanced than men were in Athens twenty-one hundred years ago; but it is calculated also to encourage Christian hearts; for the Gospel, which so long ago met and overturned these systems, is as mighty still, and will surely overcome at the last.

The Stoics were the followers of Zeno, who lived about the same date as Epicurus, and who taught his followers in a painted porch (whence the name Stoics) in the immediate vicinity of the Agora. The moral system of Zeno was the very opposite of that of Epicurus. The latter centred the man in himself; but the former bade the man look out to the order of which he was a part, and seek his happiness in conforming to that. The watchword of Zeno was that we should "live agreeably to nature." He taught, to borrow again from Mr. Lecky, "that our reason reveals to us a certain law of nature, and that a desire to conform to this law, irrespectively of all considerations of reward or pun-

ishment, of happiness or the reverse, is a possible and sufficient motive of virtue." The Epicureans sought to avoid all pain; the Stoics sought to live in an atmosphere which despised it; and it is impossible to withhold our admiration from many of the unbending and heroic men connected with this school, who, simply for the sake of the right and the true, braved the fiercest persecution without a quiver.

But though their system of morals was thus superior to that of the Epicureans, their theory of the universe was not much nobler. They were substantially pantheistic, and spoke of God as the Spirit or Reason of the universe. The universe was itself a rational soul, producing all things out of itself, and resuming them all to itself again. Matter was inseparable from deity. The human soul was corporeal, and at death it would be absorbed in God. Their system thus culminated morally in that unnatural sternness which is now everywhere associated with their very name, and theologically in a pantheism which was not easily distinguishable from materialism.

Besides these philosophical sects, Paul met with others not connected with any school, but moved only by the spirit of curiosity, which was so characteristic of the Athenians that their greatest orator reproved his hearers sharply for indulging in it, even when the darkest danger was menacing the State. Seeking for news, they lounged about the Agora, and very naturally joined themselves to the throng of disputants that gathered round the apostle.

These three parties then—the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the curious—brought Paul to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know, therefore, what these things mean." He had been proclaiming the truth as it is in Jesus in special connection with the resurrection of the dead; and though it

seemed to some that he was but a babbler, they wished to learn all he had to teach. The Council of Areopagus was accounted the most august tribunal in the city. Here Socrates had been condemned to death; and it has been supposed that Paul was brought to it to be put upon his defence for a like accusation to that which was made against the great philosopher; but I cannot gather from the narrative that there was any purpose of putting Paul upon his trial. He was asked only to expound more fully and formally the doctrines which he had broached in fragmentary conversations on the streets; and as he stood forth to comply with the request, we marvel anew at the calm confidence of the man of God. "Never," says an eloquent writer, "did orator stand up to address an audience under greater disadvantages. Everything almost of an outward kind was against him. His being a foreigner was against him; for the Athenians, who boasted that they had sprung from the soil of Attica, looked upon all other nations with contempt, and spoke of them as barbarians. His speech was against him; for to the fine ears of the Athenians, accustomed to hear their exquisite language uttered with the nicest attention to pronunciation and accent, it must have been well-nigh intolerable to hear it spoken by one whose speech was, by his own confession, contemptible, even in the esteem of the less fastidious Corinthians. His personal appearance was against him; for he was of diminutive stature, and his bodily presence was feeble; while around him were the graceful forms and noble countenances of the most perfectly developed race the world has ever seen. His subject was against him; for he stood there to denounce the religious beliefs and usages of the Hellenic nations in the very centre of the Hellenic worship, in the midst of a people enthusiastically devoted to their national superstitions to assail the time-honored prejudices of the haughtiest and most self-

confident of peoples, and in a city full of idols, and swarming with philosophers, to prove idolatry a wicked absurdity, and philosophy such as they had it a delusion and a snare."* But, trusting in the help which his Master had promised for just such occasions, the apostle was equal to the hour; and his address is one of the masterpieces of eloquence, whose excellence is acknowledged even by those who are not in sympathy with the thoughts which it expresses.

Listen to the courtesy with which he commences: "Men of Athens" (so all their orators began their speeches), "I perceive that in all things you pay more than usual attention to religion." Such is the true force of the words he uses. He does not begin with a broad condemnation, but rather with a delicately conciliatory mode of address; yet he says no more than the truth, for a poet of their own has remarked, "If there be any land which knows how to reverence and honor the gods, this surpasses in that." But, while admitting the justness of the claim thus made on their behalf, the apostle proceeds to show that where they thought themselves strongest they were in reality weak. Mark with what wisdom he turns his observation of their city to account as he continues, with a clear reference to the assertion, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; "for, as I passed by and beheld the objects which you worship, I found also an altar on which had been inscribed, To an unknown God; whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." A less skilful man would have denounced their idolatry at once; but Paul had learned to look at the various forms of heathenism as but the gropings of men in the dark after truth. Therefore, instead of crying down the error which he saw, he went first beneath it, to that spirit-

* "St. Paul at Athens," by William Lindsay Alexander, D.D., pp. 38–40.

ual craving from which it all sprung, and the existence of which, as strong as ever, in spite of all that had been done to satisfy it, was indicated by the inscription to which he called their attention. "You still want God," as if he had said, "notwithstanding your idols, and that God I am come to make known to you."

Observe now, their attention having been secured, how he declares to his hearers the truth of theism, as opposed to the materialism of the philosophers on the one hand, and the polytheism of the multitude on the other. "God that made the cosmos, and all things therein." There are creation and a Creator, in direct contradiction to Stoics and Epicureans alike. But more marvellous things are to come. "Seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything;" there are the spirituality and the immensity of God. "Seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;" there is providence, as opposed alike to the indifference with which the Epicureans clothed their deities, and to the blind fate which, according to the Stoics, held everything in the inexorable chain of an iron necessity. "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth;" there are the common origin and brotherhood of men; and by speaking thus, Paul, by implication, condemned the foolish pride of the Athenians for believing that they were nobler than all others because they sprung from the soil of their own land. "And hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;" there, again, is providence. God gave to Greece her place among the nations, and gave each tribe its place in Greece. As really as he gave Palestine under Joshua by lot to the tribes of Israel, so he has placed each people on its own heritage the world over. We may talk as we please of diplomacy, and say, "The

treaty of Vienna settled this;" "the treaty of Paris approved that;" and "the Congress of Berlin appointed something else;" but there is one higher than all human autocrats, and he has given to each nation its own position and mission. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." The design of Providence is thus subordinated to the purpose of grace; and all settlements of boundaries or fixing of habitations, whatever men may think of them at the time, are, in God's own way, made to advance the accomplishment of that "one increasing purpose," which is running through the ages, to wit, that men may seek and find the Lord. And yet men are not blameless for not having found him, for "he is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." God had not left himself without a witness among men. They might and ought to have discovered him; for, in the ordering of the universe, and in the supervision of his providence, he is not far from each of us; and though perhaps the poets Aratus and Cleanthes had written in a pantheistic sense, the Christian apostle does not scruple to quote their words, and make them point to the true God. But let us proceed. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Here, again, is God's spirituality; and we cannot but admire the cogency of the argument by which it is enforced, as well as the tenderness of the words in which it is expressed. We, being God's offspring, must be in God's likeness. But what are we? Not bodies merely. These are ours, not we. That "I myself, I," which exists in each of us, is something different from the body, something which no sculptured image of the body can adequately represent; something spiritual and intangible. But if the offspring be

such, such also must be the Father; and therefore the very thought of likening God to a gold, or silver, or marble image is absurd.

The apostle adds, "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked." The rendering, "winked at," is objectionable as liable to be misunderstood; because among us now the expression is equivalent to "connived at." Strictly speaking, God overlooks nothing. Everything comes under his eye, and he never can approve of or be indifferent to anything that dishonors his name. But Paul does not allege that he either approved or was indifferent to the conduct of men during those times of culpable ignorance when they were guilty of idolatry. What he means is, that throughout those ages he used no direct and immediate means to remedy the evil. He simply let it alone, and left it to develop itself to the utmost. Thus Paul is only repeating here in another form what he said to the men of Lystra, that God, "in times past, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;" and though we may not dogmatize concerning the Divine motive, we may perhaps discover it in the suggestive words of our apostle in another place, "after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God." He let men alone, that it might be clearly demonstrated that when left to themselves they are helpless to find their way to Him.

But now, that having been fully proved, he has come with a direct and immediate interference in the person of Jesus Christ. He has ushered in a new era. He calls now on all men everywhere to repent; and he does so "because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." Here is the doctrine of retribution confirmed by a reference to the miracle of the Redeemer's resurrection, and both are employed as motives to repentance.

Thus every clause of this address has in it something that met the state of his hearers at the time, and its full and elaborate exposition would lead one to-day into the deep things of Christian doctrine, while at the same time it would bring him into immediate conflict with many of the most popular forms of philosophic speculation. Into neither of these, however, do I choose to enter now, not because I have any fear for the truth, or any indisposition on a fitting occasion to stand forth in its defence, but because my purpose this evening has been to give you a comprehensive summary of the oration as a whole, and to show you at what points it assailed the opinions of those to whom it was addressed. Those who wish to look at the topics in detail may consult with profit "St. Paul at Athens," by Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander, of Edinburgh, and a little work under the same title by an English clergyman named Charles Shakspeare, which has lately issued from the press. But, though I do not now enter the lists with modern antagonists, I cannot forbear saying that, when I think of what the Gospel preached by Paul accomplished in the face of a philosophy which was at the very least as subtle and as acute as that of to-day, I lose all fear for its future progress. Let us only be as wise as Paul was, and take the very admissions of philosophy as finger-posts that point to something higher than itself, and in the end, like him, too, we shall succeed. There was indeed very little that was like success at first; for when he spoke of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, he was greeted with such an outburst of derisive laughter that it was in vain to think of going farther. Some mocked, and some, more polite, but not less opposed to his doctrines, said, "We will hear thee again." Yet not altogether in vain had he sown his handful of seed, for "certain men clave unto him, and believed, among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite," a member of the court in whose precincts the apostle spake,

"and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." Mockers! procrastinators! converts! So it was then. So it is still every time the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed. The nature of the result in each case was closely connected with the spirit in which they came at first. The philosophers, we may suppose, were the mockers, for the notion of a resurrection of the dead was utterly at variance with all their theories, and neither the Epicureans nor Stoics had any faith in the immortality of the soul, to say nothing of the rising of the body from the grave. The curious ones may have furnished the procrastinators, for they might not yet have exhausted the *newsiness* of the doctrines to the exposition of which they had just listened. And perhaps from each of the two classes some of the converts may have come to prove that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to any one that believeth.

So in almost every audience to-day we have the same elements and the same results. There may be lovers of pleasure here to-night who have their prototypes in these old Epicureans. There may be self-righteous ones, characterized by intellectual pride, and a stern, cold, defiant morality, skilled withal, perhaps, in the speculations which men have based on the discoveries of modern science, talking oracularly about development, and natural selection, and the survival of the fittest, and bowing Moses and his Lord alike out of court. These will both be sure to mock, unmindful of the fact that while physical theories of the universe have made no progress since the days of Lucretius, the Gospel which Paul preached has elevated everything it has touched, and purified and ennobled every community which has received it into its bosom. And, on the other hand, there may be here, too, the sensation-loving hearer, who wants to know "what the babbler will say," or who, perhaps, having come to the city on a tour of pleasure, wishes to pander to the

curiosity of others, and at the same time help to defray the expenses of his journey, by writing sketches of some of its preachers for the newspaper of his provincial town. To this class also belong the floating drift-wood of all religious audiences, who go where the current carries them, leaving nothing behind them, and alas! taking no real benefit with them; but saying, as they go, "Rather interesting preacher that! I must hear him again;" just as if the minister had been seeking only to display his own attractions, and not laboring for their instruction and salvation! How like, after all, the human nature of New York to-day is to that of Athens eighteen hundred years ago!

Such, then, was the first conflict between human philosophy and the Gospel of Christ. It looks almost, on the first blush of the matter, as if it had been a defeat for Christianity. But no; in these converts, few though they were, its power was made manifest; and before three centuries had passed away, it was discovered that the only way in which philosophy could flourish was by grafting itself in some form or other on the Gospel. It was defeated in its own high places. Then it sought to enter the Church, and there it did more damage by its alliance than it had done before by its enmity. In the recurring cycle of things, however, it has passed once more into open conflict; and our wisdom will be to go below the intellectual to the spiritual, and show that all that philosophy aims after is given by Christianity in a more perfect form. That is the great lesson for us, from this address of Paul to the Athenians; and if we choose to seek for them, we shall find inscriptions on the altars of philosophy in abundance, which, fairly interpreted, do imply, and honestly followed would lead up to, the fundamental principles of Christianity.

And now, as I conclude, let me ask what you have to say to the things set forth here by the apostle. Observe, every

position is made by him to lead up to and depend on the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead. Has Christ risen? Yea or nay? That settles the whole matter. If he has not risen, then it makes little difference whether we be Stoic, Epicurean, Peripatetic, or Academic in our views; for when death comes there is an end of us. But if he has risen, then there is a judgment-day, and an eternity of happiness or misery before every one of us. *If* he has risen? I challenge infidelity to do its utmost to prove that he has not. Nay, I go farther, and affirm, with Thomas Arnold,* that no one fact in the history of our race is proved by fuller and more convincing evidence of every sort than this, that Jesus died and rose again from the dead; and I fearlessly stake the truth of the whole Gospel on that one fact. If, then, he has risen, there is a judgment-day, and you and I will be there to give account of the deeds done in the body; to be judged in righteousness, and to receive the award of eternal life or everlasting punishment. Can any questions, therefore, be more important than these: How shall I stand in that great day? and how now shall I prepare for its dreadful ordeal? Here is the answer: Repent; return unto God; receive Christ by faith into your heart; and on the ground of his atonement, your sins will be forgiven, your soul will be renewed, and you will be openly acknowledged and acquitted by him who sits upon the great white throne.

"Great God! what do I see and hear?
The end of things created;
The Judge of mankind doth appear
On clouds of glory seated.
Low at his cross, I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet him."

* "Sermons on Christian Life," pp. 15, 16.

XV.

THE FIRST-FRUITS OF ACHAIA.

Acts xviii., 1–17.

TO the south of Macedonia, and forming part of the province of Achaia, was the famous peninsula called, from its fancied resemblance to a mulberry leaf, the Morea, and known also in classic history as the Peloponnesus. It was connected with the continent by a rocky neck of land, known as the Isthmus, which was from three to seven miles wide, and about eight miles long. Near the southern extremity of this narrow strip, and having a harbor in each of the seas between which it stood, was the ancient city of Corinth. Immediately behind the town rose a perpendicular rock to a height of two thousand feet. This was the Acrocorinthus, from the summit of which, crowned as it was by the famous temple of Venus, one might see the Acropolis of Athens, which was forty-five miles away. From its geographical position as the key to the peninsula, its natural strength as an almost impregnable fortress, and its commercial eminence, Corinth was a place of great importance throughout the history of Greece; and in its immediate neighborhood, on a lofty table-land, having an enclosure sacred to Poseidon, those games were held which took their name from the Isthmus, and vied in grandeur with the contests of Olympus.

When, however, Greece fell under the Roman yoke, Corinth was attached to the Achæan league, and, having joined in the Achæan revolt, it was taken by the Consul Mummius

and utterly destroyed. That was in the year B.C. 146, and for a whole century it lay in ruins. But with that skill in the perception of the possibilities of a place alike for military and commercial purposes which seems to have been a part of his genius, Julius Cæsar chose to plant a young Roman colony on the ancient site; and such was the rapidity with which it grew, that in the time of our apostle the city had risen to its former eminence. It commanded all the traffic between the main-land and the Morea, and the larger portion of the trade between the eastern and western parts of the Roman empire passed across the isthmus on which it stood. In those days of primitive navigation the rounding of the Malea—the most southerly promontory of the Grecian peninsula—was attended with as much of danger and delay as the doubling of Cape Horn is in modern times; and therefore ship-owners preferred that their vessels should go to Lecheum on the west, or to Cenchrea on the east, and have their cargoes carried across the isthmus, and reshipped in other crafts. Repeated attempts were made to form a canal which should unite both seas, but these had always failed; and the most that was accomplished was the construction of a road—named Diolkos—to a cradle on which ships of moderate tonnage might be lifted without disturbing their cargoes, and so transferred to the opposite port and relaunched within a day. The position of Corinth relative to the ancient world was thus not unlike that occupied now by Alexandria, as between England and India, or by Panama, as between the trade of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Naturally, therefore, it drew to itself men from all quarters of the empire, and came to be one of the wealthiest cities of antiquity.

But riches drew in their train their too frequent attendants —luxury and vice. The worship of the city was that of Venus in its grossest form, and its wickedness had passed into

a proverb; so that, when a man was said to "Corinthianize," the implication was that he had entered upon a career of uttermost debauchery. But the same reasons which had led the apostle to give so much time to Antioch and Thessalonica determined him to put forth every effort for the planting of the Gospel in Corinth; and it is to-day a significant fact that, while almost every vestige of the ancient city has disappeared, the doctrine of "Jesus Christ and him crucified" which Paul there proclaimed is as mighty as ever in the salvation of every one that believeth. "Except seven Doric columns, which mark the site of an ancient temple, and a few masses of Roman masonry, there is nothing left of the great city in which Paul preached. The great rock flings its mighty shadow in the morning over the bare site of the departed town, and in the evening backward across the isthmus; but there are none now to rejoice in its shelter. Its fortress is abandoned and tenantless; the platform at its foot, which has twice been the site of a noble city, has now but a few scattered houses upon it, and itself remains in its loneliness, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."* But he who when he entered it was little regarded, and whose labors in it brought upon him the bitter enmity of some and the cynical contempt of others, has given it undying interest; for it is remembered now for its association with him more than for all the other episodes in its history put together.

Paul came to Corinth direct from Athens. We cannot tell whether he came by land or sea, but he was still alone; for Silas had not come from Berea, and Timothy had not yet returned from the confidential mission to Thessalonica on which he had been sent. Thus, as at Athens, the apostle was unaccompanied save by his invisible Master, when

* "St. Paul in Greece," by Rev. G. S. Davies, M.A., pp. 168, 169.

first he passed through the streets of this luxurious and dissolute city. His earliest care was to secure a lodging and the means of earning his daily bread. Naturally, therefore, he went to the locality in which those engaged in tent-making dwelt, and there God had prepared a home for him, for a time at least, in the house of a Jewish couple who had themselves only recently arrived from Rome. There was, indeed, in Corinth, as in other great commercial centres, a large permanent Jewish population; but just at this juncture that element had been increased, because, by a decree of the Emperor Claudius, every Jew had been banished from Rome.

This decree, incidentally mentioned by Luke, is referred to by the Roman historian Suetonius, who says, "The Jews, who were in constant tumult, Chrestus being their leader, he banished from Rome."* Most scholars believe that Chrestus in that passage is a corruption for Christus; and they argue that already the Gospel was known in the Imperial City, and that, as in other places, the Jews, being fiercely opposed to it, rose up against the early converts. This caused disturbances similar to those which we have seen already in Thessalonica and Berea, and as in the course of these outbreaks the name Christus would be often mentioned, it came to be regarded as that of a leader among them; but not caring to enter into their religious disputes, or to have the peace of the city endangered by them, the emperor banished the Jews in a body from the capital.

Among those who came under the sweep of this decree were Aquila and Priscilla, who, originally from Pontus, had been prosecuting their business in Rome, and had now found

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* Suetonius; Claudius, c. 25. See the passage quoted and commented on by Plumptre in Ellicott's "New Testament Commentary for English Readers," vol. ii., p. 120.

a temporary resting-place in Corinth. Aquila was a tent-maker, and the apostle finding employment in the same calling, was received by him into his house, the result being that a close and life-long friendship sprung up between them. We shall afterward find that they were in Ephesus at the time of the apostle's sojourn there. From other incidental allusions to them, we discover that they were back in Rome when he wrote his letter to the Christians in the metropolis. Again, when he dictated his last letter to Timothy, we learn that they were then once more in Ephesus. It does not appear whether when the apostle first made their acquaintance Aquila and Priscilla were Christians or not. They had come from Rome; and as there were already many disciples in that city, it is not impossible that they were converted there. Had that been the case, however, we might have expected that they would have been described here as adherents to the faith. On the other hand, if their conversion had occurred after Paul had come to know them, and in consequence of his dealings with them, we might have supposed that such a fact would have been recorded, and that he would have somewhere spoken of them as his children in the faith, or have numbered them, as he did others, among "the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ." On the whole, therefore, I am disposed to conclude that they were already Christians, and that Paul found in that the reason which determined him to take up his abode with them.

At his first arrival in Corinth, Paul was thrown entirely on his own resources for his temporal support; and all through his residence there he refused to accept anything from any of the converts in acknowledgment of his spiritual services. He did this, not because he had any hesitation about the principle that he that is taught in the word ought to communicate to him that teacheth in all good things, but rather because, as at Thessalonica, there was some local rea-

son why he considered it inexpedient that he should not insist upon his right; and in his letters to them he is careful to let it be known that his conduct in this matter with them was exceptional—that it was, in a sense, a wrong which he had done to them, and that it was not to be construed into a precedent binding churches and preachers generally. Yet it must have cost him much to carry out this purpose, since just then, as we learn from his first letter to the church which he was now founding, the state of his health was far from good, for he says that he was with them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."* As he prosecuted his work, we cannot but believe that he would find some way of turning the thoughts of his fellow-craftsmen in the direction of Christ. Perhaps the larger number of those among whom he labored were Jews, and that would give them a deeper interest in his eyes; but the great occasions for his evangelistic exertions were on the Sabbaths, when he met in the synagogue his kinsmen according to the flesh, and such Greeks as, without having become proselytes, had so far abjured polytheism as to number themselves among the worshippers of the one God. Thus he continued, for a time, working during the other days, and preaching on the Sabbaths, until his two companions came from Macedonia, bringing him news from his friends at Berea, and an account of the state of matters at Thessalonica. The effect of this intelligence on his heart is detailed by him in his first letter to the Thessalonians, which belongs to this date, and is the earliest of all his epistles. He says, "When Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: therefore, brethren, we were comfort-

* 1 Cor. ii., 3.

ed over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."* It appears, however, that the Thessalonians had either misunderstood or misapplied certain things which he had said, during his visit to their city, on the subject of the Lord's second coming. They imagined that his advent was to be immediate, and some of them went so far as to give up all work, that they might do nothing but wait for his appearing; while others, thinking that only those who were living in the body at the time would share in the glory and blessedness of his coming, were greatly distressed at the death of their Christian relatives. Therefore he wrote to them that letter, from which I have just quoted, in which he assures his readers that the dead in Christ, so far from being deprived of the blessedness connected with the second advent, should be raised by Christ first, before the living should be changed, and should be partakers equally with the living in that state of felicity which he thus sums up: "So shall we be ever with the Lord."†

The second letter to the Thessalonians belongs to this same residence in Corinth, and may perhaps be here most conveniently characterized. The first epistle had done some good; but after they had received it, some one wishing—for what purpose does not appear—to work upon their feelings and fears, wrote a letter in the apostle's name,‡ in which it was alleged that the coming of the Lord was close upon them. This caused great consternation among them, so that many were walking disorderly, and a panic was created. When Paul heard of these things he sent his second epistle, supplementing the teachings of his first by a prophetic forecast of certain things which were to take place before the coming of the Lord, and alleging that not until there had occurred

* 1 Thess. iii., 6–8. † 1 Thess. iv., 13–18. ‡ 2 Thess. ii., 2.

some great apostasy, under influences which he has personified as the man of sin, would the Lord appear.

It has often been alleged that the statements of these two epistles are inconsistent with each other on the subject of the second coming; and that the fact that Christ has not yet come seems to falsify the assertions which they contain, and so to invalidate the claim that is made for the inspiration of the apostle. I have never seen these objections so clearly and fully met as in the following sentences from Dean Alford, which I quote as much for their own intrinsic importance as because of the interest which has been recently awakened in this old topic: "The time of our Lord's coming was hidden from all created beings—nay, in the mystery of his mediatorial office, from the Son himself (Mark xiii., 32). Even after his resurrection, when questioned by the apostles as to the time of his restoring the kingdom to Israel, his reply is still that it is not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power (Acts i., 7). Here, then, is a plain indication, which has not, I think, been sufficiently made use of in judging of the epistles. The Spirit was to *testify of Christ*, to take of the things of Christ and show them unto the apostles. So that, however much that Spirit, in his infinite wisdom, might be pleased to impart to them of the details and accompanying circumstances of the Lord's appearing, we may be sure that the truth spoken by the Lord, 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man,' would hold good with regard to them, and be traced in their writings. If they were true men, and their words and epistles the genuine production of inspiration in them by that Spirit of Truth, we may expect to find in such speeches and writings tokens of their appointed uncertainty of day and hour: expectations true in expression, and fully justified by appearance, yet corrected as God's purposes were manifested by advancing experience

and larger effusions of the spirit of prophecy. If then I find, in the course of Paul's epistles, that expressions which occur in the earlier ones, and seem to indicate expectation of the Lord's almost immediate coming, are gradually modified—disappear altogether in the epistles of the imprisonment—and are succeeded by others speaking in a very different strain of dissolving and being with Christ, and passing through death and resurrection in the latest epistles, I regard it not as a strange thing, not as a circumstance which I must explain away for fear of weakening the authority of the epistles, but as exactly that which I should expect to find as the very strongest testimony that these epistles were written by one who was left in uncertainty—not by one who wished to make it appear that inspiration had rendered him omniscient. And in this, the earliest of those epistles, I do find exactly that which I might expect on this head. While every word and every detail respecting the Lord's coming is a perpetual inheritance for the Church, while we continue to comfort one another with the glorious and heart-stirring sentences which he utters to us 'in the word of the Lord,' no candid eye can help seeing in the epistle how the uncertainty of 'the day and the hour' has tinged all these passages with a hue of near anticipation—how natural it was that the Thessalonians, receiving this epistle, should have allowed that anticipation to be brought even yet nearer, and have imagined the day to be actually at hand."*

The arrival of Silas and Timothy tended to cheer Paul, not only because they brought good news, but also because of the influence of their fellowship and co-operation on him. He became at once more animated and earnest. He was "pressed in the spirit;" or, as another and better reading has it, "in word." The term rendered "pressed" is very

* Alford's "How to Study the New Testament," vol. ii., pp. 38–40.

strong. It is the same as that employed by Jesus when, speaking of his baptism of blood, he says, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!"* and it is used by Paul himself in that remarkable passage in which, vindicating himself from the accusation of being beside himself, he says, "For the love of Christ constraineth me."† Literally it means "he was held together;" that is to say, he was concentrated, soul, body, and spirit, upon the one great object of his mission—the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. The first effect of this outburst of earnestness was that his Jewish antagonists were provoked to more bitter opposition; and when they blasphemed and rejected Jesus, he departed from them, saying, with the symbolic accompaniment of the shaking of his raiment, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." After that he ceased to enter the synagogue; but the house adjoining it, which belonged to a proselyte named Justus, was placed at his disposal, and there he statedly met all who chose to wait upon his ministry. The Lord again "gave testimony to the word of his grace," and many were converted. Foremost among these was the household of Stephanas, whom he calls "the first-fruits of Achaia,"‡ to Christ; and Epenetus, who is similarly spoken of in the Epistle to the Romans.§ Nor must we forget Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and Gaius, who on his subsequent visit to Corinth entertained him in his house.‖ All these, with the exception of Epenetus, the apostle, contrary to his custom, baptized with his own hand; and after the appearance of division among the members of the Corinthian Church, we find him recording his thanks that he had baptized none others there; for his object was not to

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* Luke xii., 50. † 2 Cor. v., 14. ‡ 1 Cor. xvi., 15.
§ Rom. xvi., 5. ‖ Rom. xvi., 23.

found a sect of Paulites, but to bring men to Christ; not to baptize—so little did he reckon of that ordinance which has been made an occasion of disunion in modern times—but to preach the Gospel.*

Besides those whom we have named, and who seem to have been persons of note, we are told that many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized; and of these some at least had been deeply aggravated sinners, for thus he writes to them:† "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." But in spite of, nay, perhaps just because of these trophies of the Gospel's power, greater trials were before him; and God, who "sendeth no man a warfare on his own charges," prepared him, by a special manifestation of his grace, to meet and overcome them. The Lord stood by him in a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." On the strength of that assurance he held on at his work for eighteen months, instructing the converted, convincing the inquiring, and silencing the gainsaying; but at the end of that time an attempt was made to put an end to his labors through the intervention of a new proconsul, who had just come to take the oversight of the province. His name was originally Junius Annæus Novatus; but he took that of Gallio when he was adopted into the family of Junius Gallio, the rhetorician; and by that he is known both here and

* 1 Cor. i., 14–17. † 1 Cor. vi., 9–11.

in profane history. He was the brother of Seneca, the famous Roman philosopher, who speaks of him with great affection, and describes him as a man of integrity, who gained the regard of all with whom he came into contact by his amiable temper and winning manners. Presuming, perhaps, on his easy good-nature, the enemies of Paul made the arrival of this man at Corinth the occasion for dragging the apostle before him on the accusation of "persuading men to worship God contrary to the law." But they had reckoned without their host; for, fresh from the disturbances in Rome, and not wishing to be mixed up with what he regarded as a Jewish dispute, above all recognizing the limits of his office which had to do with civil and not religious matters, he said, "If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat." Seeing that the Jews were not sustained by the proconsul, the Gentiles, who were always glad of an opportunity of showing their animosity to the Israelites, took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue—either the successor of Crispus or the president of another synagogue—and beat him severely, while Gallio, winking hard, took no notice of the outrage, and was probably secretly enjoying this new illustration of "the biter bit;" for "he cared for none of these things." Thus there is something to be blamed as well as to be praised in the conduct of the proconsul. He was right in refusing to become a judge in religious affairs. He was right in declining to put Paul down by the force of the civil power; and it would have been well for the world if rulers had been wise enough in all ages and nations to act upon this principle. But he was wrong in allowing any outrage to be perpetrated on Sosthenes. The Greeks had as little right to maltreat

him, as Sosthenes had to interfere with Paul; and Gallio, as the impartial dispenser of justice, while declining to take any action in the case of Paul, should have protected Sosthenes, and insisted on the preservation of the public peace. So far, therefore, he was to be condemned; but the phrase, "He cared for none of these things," must not be interpreted as if he had no regard for truth, or was personally indifferent to religion. That may or may not have been the case. But in justice we must protest against making these words of Luke's narrative imply that he was a thorough agnostic, with no principles strong enough to make him either one thing or another. They simply mean that he was indifferent to the tumult which resulted in the beating of Sosthenes.

It is a little remarkable that a person named Sosthenes is associated with Paul in the salutation of the first of the two letters to the Corinthians, and it may be that he was the same person that is mentioned in the history of this riot. But as the name was far from an uncommon one, it is perhaps more natural to suppose that the reference is to two different men.

After this tumult Paul remained "a good while" longer at Corinth; but here we must meanwhile leave him, while we gather up a few practical lessons from this portion of his history.

And, in the first place, we have suggested to us the dignity of labor. It may be strange to us now, with our modern notions of the clergy, to think of the apostle as handling the commonplace tools of a tent-maker; yet, when occasion called for it, he did not hesitate to work at that humble craft. Nor was he ashamed of his toil. He felt that he was serving Christ as really in the prosecution of that sort of manual labor as in the preaching of the Gospel; and we may be sure that he endeavored to do his best in both. It

was said of a humble seamstress that "she put her conscience into every stitch;" and I am confident that our apostle would do everything that was required of him with all his heart. He would think not merely of his human employer, but also and especially of his Divine Master, and the love which he bore to his Lord would show itself in the excellence of the work he did. Before men, his ability to labor for his own support gave him a noble independence; before God, it furnished him an opportunity of showing his fidelity even in that which was least.

But if he was not ashamed of his manual labor, neither was he afraid, while engaged in his work, to let his Christian character come out, and seek the good of his fellow-craftsmen. Indeed, it would seem that as one result of such efforts the workshop of Aquila became a Christian church; and in this we have another illustration of the effectiveness of that close personal dealing with men, one by one, which, alas! is too frequently neglected by those who are ambitious of addressing some great congregation. Now, what an example have we in all this for the Christian artisans of our modern times? Let them not be ashamed of their handicraft. An honest man supporting himself and his family by his faithful labor, no matter how lowly the trade at which he works may be, is one of the noblest sights the sun looks down upon on earth. When we remember that the hands of the Lord Jesus were familiar with the implements of the carpenter, and that those of Paul often ministered to his necessities, we must feel that there is a dignity in manual labor which is far above that which is conferred by any patent of nobility, or any trappings of wealth. I never go into a joiner's shop and hear the "whish" of the plane, or the rasp of the saw, or the stroke of the hammer without thinking of my Lord at Nazareth, and honoring the workman for the Saviour's sake. No man can be dis-

graced by doing what he did; and if our working-men who are Christians would only imitate him, and seek, like Paul, while not neglecting the work before them, to use their opportunities for publishing the truth as it is in Jesus, they would be the noblest of home missionaries, and would compel their employers to hold them in honor. We have heard much of late of the relations between capital and labor, and many advices have been given for the prevention of those misunderstandings which have given birth to strikes and the various forms of socialism—fraught with so much mischief to the commonwealth—but never until employers and employés alike become the disciples of Christ, and learn thus to honor each other, will there be any permanent improvement. Christ is the great peace-maker between man and man, even as he is the only mediator between God and man. He alone, who shed his blood for sinners, can truly teach us to "honor all men," and to do to others as we would that they should do to us; and these unseemly controversies shall cease only when masters and workmen alike shall own allegiance to him. That is a delightful scene described in the sweet pastoral of the Book of Ruth, when, as Boaz went out to the field wherein his servants were reaping, he said to them, "The Lord be with you;" and they answered him, "The Lord bless thee." There was piety combined with industry, and, as the result, mutual courtesy and consideration. Now, when the same spirit of reverence for God shall possess alike employers and employed, the same respect for each other shall be cherished by them. The fault is not merely that the principles of political economy are so little understood, though much might be accomplished through the diffusion of a knowledge of that science; but also and especially that neither of the two classes more immediately interested has yet begun to comprehend or act upon the far-reaching principles of the

Gospel of Christ. The only remedy that will effectually arrest the evil, to which so many are looking with dismay, is home evangelization; and even as an insurance premium against such a cataclysm as Paris witnessed a few years ago, it would be well for those who are numbered among the capitalists of our country to give liberal support to all agencies that are seeking wisely the conversion of the people in our tenement houses and on our wharves.

But, in the second place, we have in this narrative a beautiful example of conjugal co-operation in the Gospel of Christ. To-night, for the first time, we come into contact with that excellent couple who were so helpful to Paul and so beloved by him—Priscilla and Aquila. It is remarkable that they are always mentioned together as being of one heart and mind in religious things; and it is further noteworthy that wherever they were, their house was opened as a meeting-place for the believers. Thus in Ephesus, whither they accompanied Paul from Corinth, we find* that there was a church in their house; and at Rome, whither they went from Ephesus, we discover† that there also they maintained their former habit, while the expressions used concerning them by the apostle when he says that they had laid down their own necks for his sake, and that not only he, but also all the Gentile churches gave them thanks, are such as to indicate that they had both risked their lives for his preservation and rendered him great assistance in his work. Now, what a delightful picture of Christian unity does the combination of these different features present? William Arnot has compared the conjugal union in some cases to that of two ships at sea bound to each other by short, strong chains. They are not so identified as to be one, and yet they are not so apart as to be separated. So it happens

* 1 Cor. xvi., 19. † Rom. xvi., 3.

that when a storm rises they have separate and independent motion, while yet they are chained together; and thus "they will rasp each other's sides off, and tear open each other's hearts, and go down together."* This, alas! is only too vivid an illustration of what sometimes happens in that relationship which ought to be the sweetest and most helpful of human life. The husband and the wife oppose each other. She would be ready to do much in the service of the Lord, but he prevents her, if not by positive antagonism, at least with that negative obstructiveness which is equally effective in securing its purpose. Or he would become an active member of the Church, and a leader in all good works, but she regards everything of the sort with dislike, and therefore he does nothing. An old proverb says that "a man can be no richer than his wife will let him;" and that holds of the riches of faith and of good works as well as of the vulgar wealth of earth; while, again, it is just as true that the wife can do little or nothing against the influence of the husband. Therefore, let those who are knit together in that sacred union seek to be truly one in this the highest and noblest of all co-operation—the fellowship of the Gospel. Let them strengthen each other's hands in God, and let their home be opened to any faithful Paul or any eloquent Apollos whom God in his providence may send them. There are no more touching chapters in this history than those which tell of the friendship between this couple and our noble apostle; and the tender tone in which he always connects Priscilla with her husband is a convincing proof of the falsehood of that modern libel that Paul was deficient in his appreciation of womanhood.

We are reminded, in the third place, that increased ear-

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* "Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth," by William Arnot, First Series, p. 136.

nestness in the service of God provokes increased opposition from its enemies. When the apostle came to Corinth, he was probably in feeble health, and he was certainly somewhat depressed in spirit. He was, more than perhaps we think, a man of moods; and he had, besides, an extremely sensitive disposition. Added to these characteristics was a tenderness of attachment to those whom he really loved, which made him long for them greatly when he happened to be absent from them. Now, when we take all these things into account, and remember that Silas and Timothy were not with him when he entered Corinth, we can understand why he had little "liberty" in his first ministrations there. But when his fellow-evangelists came to him with good tidings, his joy of heart returned, and with that his energy for his work came back again. His earnestness unified his purpose, and led him to concentrate his efforts on the proclamation of one central truth. As we learn from his epistles, he "delivered unto them first of all that which he also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures." He determined "not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified." He proclaimed that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."* This increased fervor of concentration on his work of preaching the simple Gospel produced at once new antagonism. The Jews were indignant at the universal terms in which his message was expressed. The Greeks ridiculed the very idea of salvation through faith in one who had been crucified. To the former the cross was a stumbling-block; to the latter it was foolishness: yet the preacher held on; and the result in the conversion of many of the vilest in that vile city amply repaid his efforts.

* 1 Cor. xv., 3; ii., 2; 2 Cor. v., 19.

Now, from this experience of his, let us learn not to be distressed by antagonism. That is only the testimony borne to our earnestness by our opponents. If we were feeble in our advocacy of truth, or in our assaults on error, the world would let us alone. But so soon as we put forth our efforts like men who are "pressed in spirit," enemies will assail us with all their force. If they see in us the spirit of compromise they will not trouble themselves about us; but if they perceive that, like Paul, we have loyalty to conscience and to Christ, they will endeavor by all means in their power to get rid of us. Still, they cannot do always what they wish, for God had promised to take care of Paul, and he will protect us. No longer now, indeed, have we such visible manifestations of his presence as those which Paul enjoyed; but every candid reader of the lives of such men as William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Knox, and John Bunyan will discover that God was with them in their times of extremity just as really as he was here with the apostle. Nay, are there not some among ourselves who can say that he has protected us, and who from our own experience can encourage those who, it may be, are now in conflict? Despair not, ye who are contending with many and malicious adversaries. You may be surrounded with earthly antagonists, but between you and them there is an inner rampart which one who knew its impregnability has thus described: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Go then, and be this your song, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."*

* Psa. xxxiv., 7; xxvii., 3, 5.

XVI.

EPHESUS.

Acts xviii., 18; xix., 20.

AFTER the failure of the Jews to bring Paul under the ban of the Roman proconsul at Corinth, the apostle remained for a considerable time longer in the city, and was permitted to carry on his work without molestation or interference from any quarter. But it was not his particular mission to settle permanently in any place, however important or central it might be. He seems rather to have been fired with the noble ambition of beginning the work of the Lord in many such cities, and leaving those who were the earliest converts to the faith to prosecute the enterprise as best they might, while he commended them to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and continued, as his letters attest, to take himself a loving and watchful interest in their welfare. In this way the churches even in apostolic days were trained for the time when the apostles should be no longer on the earth; for they were left very much to their own resources, and only when something called for rectification among them was apostolical authority exercised over them. So Paul did not remain altogether at Corinth, but, after a formal leave-taking of the brethren, he went to Cenchrea, the eastern port of the city, and took ship for Syria. But before embarking he performed a ceremonial act which calls for some attention from us, though when we have said all that can be said about it we shall still be left in much uncertainty. Luke says he "took his leave

of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head at Cenchrea: for he had a vow." Some have cut the knot by alleging that the act thus described must be understood as Aquila's, and not as Paul's. Now, it is true that in the original the participle "having shorn" may be read in connection with Aquila as the person last named; but still the natural and obvious reference of the word is to Paul, as being the principal subject of the sentence. The very next clause refers to him as distinguished from Aquila; and, as Alford has observed, there are in the paragraph from the eighteenth to the end of the twenty-third verse no fewer than nine participles, of which eight undeniably refer to Paul; and that affords a very strong presumption, amounting almost to a decisive proof, that the ninth one, which is the case in dispute, must be connected with him too.* Moreover, the shaving or shearing of the head involved in it a visit as soon as possible afterward to Jerusalem; but Aquila, as we shall find, went no farther than Ephesus, while the apostle hastened forward to the Holy City. Besides, it will not do to turn away from that which is the first view that is suggested to us by the words, simply because we think that the action which they describe is one which is inconsistent with what the apostle has elsewhere said. There is nothing wrong, in itself considered, in making a vow, provided that to which we bind ourselves be not in its own nature sinful. Jacob vowed a vow before the Mosaic law came into existence; and Paul is not necessarily to be blamed for doing the same thing, even though he has affirmed that obedience to that law is not essential to salvation. He was a Jew, and as such he may have continued by preference to practise the customs of his nation, even though he refused to make them obliga-

* See Alford's "Greek Testament," *in loco.*

tory on others. Nay, on a subsequent occasion in his history, when he paid his last visit to Jerusalem, we actually, and without any possibility of controversy regarding it, find him counselled by the brethren to take part with others in the observance of the ritual appointed for those who had taken a vow upon them, and it is recorded that "Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, entered into the Temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them."* Now, in the light of that statement, we have no hesitation whatever in referring the vow and the shearing of the head at Cenchrea specified in the narrative before us, not to Aquila, but to Paul.

When, however, we go on to ask what was the nature of this vow, and what was its relation to the Jewish law, we have a little more difficulty in coming to a decision. The law concerning the vow of the Nazarite was that the person who made it was to abstain from wine and strong drink, and was to allow no razor to come upon his head until the time appointed had expired. If accidentally he should defile himself by coming into contact with a dead body, he was to shave his head, offer certain prescribed sacrifices, and begin anew, counting nothing for the time which had elapsed; but if nothing interfered, then at the end of the days he was to offer sacrifices after an appointed form; and it is added in the statute, "The Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of his separation and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering."† From this it appears that the shaving of the head marked either the contracting of ceremonial uncleanness by a man who was under a vow, or the terminaion of the time for

* Acts xxi. 26. † Numb. vi., 1–21.

which the vow was taken. In the case before us, the latter seems to me to have been the occasion of the shearing of Paul's hair; but the law provided that it should be connected with the offering of sacrifice; and as that could be done only at Jerusalem, we may find therein the reason for Paul's urgency to visit the Holy City at this particular time, for he said to the Ephesian Jews, "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem."

But why should he be making a vow at all? Some would reply that he desired simply to conciliate his kinsmen according to the flesh by letting them see that, though he was uncompromising in his contending for the liberty of the Gentiles, he was himself quite willing to conform to the law of Moses as a Jew, and no doubt this was one of the instances in which he became as a Jew to the Jews. But there must have been some special occasion for his manifestation of this conformity; and perhaps Josephus may help us to discover what that was when he says that "it was customary for those who had been afflicted with any distemper, or had labored under any other difficulties, to make a vow that for thirty days before they offered sacrifice they will abstain from wine, and will at the expiration of that time shave their heads." Now we know that Paul had been afflicted with great bodily weakness at Corinth, and we further know that he had been in considerable danger from his enemies, for God would not have favored him with so encouraging a vision as that referred to in our last lecture if he had not felt himself encompassed with adversaries. It is probable, therefore, that his vow was in connection with his recovery from illness, or with his deliverance from his enemies when they dragged him before Gallio's tribunal.

He was accompanied on his voyage by Aquila and Priscilla; and probably also by Timothy and Silas. Perhaps Gaius and Aristarchus, who are afterward found at Ephe-

sus, and are called his "companions in travel,"* were also fellow-passengers with him. The sail to Ephesus sometimes required ten or eleven days ;† but at the season of the year when Paul was travelling, it might be accomplished in a much shorter time. At Ephesus he landed either to take another vessel, or to spend a day or two in the city, while that in which he came took in more cargo before proceeding to Cæsarea. One of the days so spent was the Sabbath; and ever on the outlook for an opportunity of usefulness, he entered into the Jewish synagogue and reasoned with his fellow-countrymen, after his manner, out of the Scriptures. His hearers were deeply interested in his statements, and eagerly desired that he would remain among them; but he was bent on reaching Jerusalem for the feast —either the Passover or the Pentecost—which was then approaching; and promising to return to them, if God would permit, he left Aquila and Priscilla with them, and proceeded on his voyage.

On his arrival at Cæsarea he went direct to Jerusalem, and having saluted the church there, on this his fourth visit since his conversion, he left Silas with his friends, and, accompanied by Timothy, proceeded to Antioch, thus completing his second missionary circuit.

After spending some time happily there with his former friends, and enjoying a brief season of respite from anxiety and peril, he set forth on his third missionary journey, taking his way through the cities of Galatia and Phrygia in order, and strengthening all the disciples. In the churches of the former province it would appear that some evil influence had been at work, for he found it necessary to denounce every one who had preached to them another gospel than that which he proclaimed, while at the same time he told

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* Acts xix., 29. † Conybeare and Howson, vol. i., p. 454.

them some unpalatable truth, for which they counted him as their enemy.* We know next to nothing of what was said or done by him on this occasion, but it is likely that he passed on to Phrygia in the hope that he had re-established the Galatians in the faith. In the province last named were the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, and Iconium, and in the neighboring district were Antioch of Pisidia and the cities of Lycaonia; but we cannot tell precisely what course the apostle followed, and it is nearly certain that some of the Phrygian cities had not been visited by him before he wrote his letter to the Colossians. All we know is that after he had passed through this high-lying district he repaired to Ephesus, there to begin those labors which he prosecuted night and day "by the space of three years."

Before he reached that city, however, Aquila and Priscilla were instrumental in preparing the way for his labors, and the historian pauses for a moment and introduces a brief digression that we may the better understand what is to follow. There came to Ephesus, during Paul's prosecution of his missionary work in upper Asia, a Jew named Apollos, from Alexandria, that celebrated city where the three great streams of influence—the Oriental, the Jewish, and the Grecian—came together and produced such important results for good and evil, not upon the world alone, but also on the Christian Church. It was the home of Philo, the Jewish teacher, whose allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament has in it so much in common with the Epistle to the Hebrews, and whose doctrine of the Logos, though essentially different from that of the fourth evangelist, has not a little that is apparently in affinity with it.† We cannot

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* Gal. i., 9; iv., 16.

† See on this whole subject "History of the Apostolic Church," by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., pp. 178–182.

doubt, therefore, that Apollos must have come in some degree under the fascination which this mixture of Greek Platonism with Jewish mysticism had for so many minds; but he appears to have been a genuine truth-seeker, eager to welcome everything that came to him duly authenticated, and therefore, having heard of John the Baptist and his proclamation of the coming Messiah, and having been convinced of the divinity of his commission, he had not hesitated to enroll himself among his followers; but he had apparently not yet heard of the Christ as already come. Still, with the zeal of one who feels that he has something to communicate, he taught boldly in the synagogue all the things of the Lord which he knew, and there he was heard by Aquila and Priscilla. They saw at once the hopefulness of his position, and with great wisdom they took him to their home and privately "expounded to him the way of God more perfectly." Had they openly controverted him, or in any way seemed to put him on his defence, the result might have been disastrous; but, as it was, the effect was most satisfactory, for he became a Christian; and when he wished to go to Corinth, the disciples at Ephesus gave him letters of commendation to the brethren of that city. There he was blessed to the strengthening of the disciples, and the conviction and conversion of many Jews. He was thus a most successful waterer of the field which Paul had planted. It is true, indeed, that his winning eloquence and perhaps also his peculiar manner of presenting the Gospel, which could not fail to have in it some trace of his early training, disposed a party in the church at Corinth to call themselves by his name, and repudiate the authority of Paul; but such a movement had no encouragement from him, for Paul speaks of him always as a beloved colleague, and had so much confidence in him as to urge him to return to Corinth, even after the beginning of the divisions there. On the

other hand — not to be outdone in the spirit of brotherhood—Apollos would not consent to go, lest his presence might be the occasion of stirring up new strife. His name is mentioned only once in the New Testament apart from his connection with Corinth and Aquila, so that we know nothing whatever with certainty of his after-history. Many, following Luther, have conjectured that he was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; but if the Pauline authorship of that treatise is to be given up—which I for one am not yet disposed to admit—it would seem to me that a much stronger case could be made out for Luke than for Apollos. But however Apollos was engaged, we may be sure, from the few glimpses we have had of him at Ephesus and Corinth, that he was indefatigable and persistent in the Redeemer's cause.

Returning now to Paul, we find him, after his visit to Galatia and Phrygia, taking up his abode at Ephesus. That city was at this time the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and the seat of the proconsular government. One of the chief commercial centres of Asia Minor, it stood upon the south of a plain whose extent was five miles from east to west by three from north to south, and through which the river Cayster ran almost diagonally from the north-east to the south-west. This plain, open to the sea on its western side, was hemmed in on every other by precipitous mountains. As the voyager sailed up the river from the Mediterranean, he entered at length a spacious natural basin, which stretched away toward the right, and formed a magnificent harbor. This was called the Panormus, and was the great source of the city's prosperity; for commerce of all kinds was attracted to its waters, and men of all nationalities met in its stirring streets. The city itself had been founded originally by a colony of Greeks; but the inhabitants had become to a large extent Orientalized both

in habits and religion. The great object of worship among them was the goddess Diana, whose magnificent temple was justly accounted one of the wonders of the world.* But though called by a Greek name, we must not confound this Diana with "the huntress chaste and fair" of classic poetry. The idol which was enshrined in the midst of such grandeur was an ugly figure, resembling some of those found in our own days in India. It had a striking likeness in outline to an Egyptian mummy; but as, according to the popular legend, it had fallen just as it was from heaven, it was an object of the greatest veneration. It was evidently designed at first as a symbol of the productive powers of nature. and was more nearly allied to the Oriental Astarte than to the Grecian Artemis. All that now remains of the temple are the arches on which the raised platform on which it stood was reared; but it is said that eight of the pillars may still be seen in the Mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople.

So complete is now the desolation of the city, that no human being lives within the circle of the ancient walls. The basin which formed the harbor has become a pestilential marsh; and though the remains of some of its ancient splendor have been brought to light by Mr. Wood in his recent excavations, there is nothing now save the bleating of the goat or the croak of the raven to break the awesome silence of the place which once resounded with the frantic shout: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

It is probable that here again Paul took up his abode with Aquila and Priscilla, for they are mentioned as saluting

* It was a perfect specimen of the Ionic style, and had the following proportions: length, 425 feet; breadth, 220 feet; columns, 120, of which seven were the gifts of kings. It replaced that which was set on fire by Herostratus on the night on which Alexander the Great was born; and 220 years were occupied in its erection.

the Corinthians in the first epistle, which is commonly believed to have been written from this place. We may, therefore, conclude that he wrought with them at his trade, for here too his hands ministered to his necessities.

On his first arrival, he came into contact with certain persons whose peculiar stage of attainment in knowledge and experience it is difficult exactly to define. They are called "disciples," and are said to have "believed." They were thus Christians, and farther advanced than Apollos was when he was found by Aquila, for they believed Jesus to be the Messiah. But when they were asked whether they had received the Holy Ghost, they replied that they did not know whether or not the Holy Ghost had been yet given; and to the inquiry, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" they answered, "Unto John's baptism." They were thus in the position in which a believing disciple of Jesus would have been if he had never heard of the events of the Day of Pentecost, or come into contact with one who could bestow upon him the gift of the Spirit. But as the baptism of John was quite different in many respects from Christian baptism, and was in the main connected with faith in the Messiah who was to come, Paul gave them such instruction as led them to see it to be their duty to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; and in connection with the administration of that ordinance he laid his hands upon them and imparted to them the Holy Ghost, so that they spoke with tongues and prophesied. This was, as it were, a supplementary Pentecost — a bestowment on these twelve disciples of those gifts which the ascended Christ sent down on the hundred and twenty in the upper room—and so a lifting of them up to the level of those who had already been endowed with "power from on high."

The whole story of these Johannine Christians, as we may call them, is involved in obscurity. We cannot tell how

they came to know so much without knowing more. We have no information as to the circumstances which led to their being at Ephesus at this particular time, and we do not hear a word of them in after-days; but the record is useful as establishing a clear distinction between John's baptism and that of Christ, and between baptism with water and the baptism of the Holy Ghost; while it illustrates the truth that those who are walking up to the light they have are always the most ready to welcome more light when it appears.

According to his invariable habit, Paul went first to the Jews in Ephesus. On his former hurried visit, he had awakened their interest greatly in the matters which he submitted to them, and we may believe that at first they were eager to hear his discourses. Thus encouraged, he labored among *them* exclusively for three months; but at the end of that time, when those who had resisted his appeals began to be hardened and to blaspheme the Gospel, he withdrew from the synagogue, and began to teach daily in the school of one Tyrannus. We know neither who this man was nor what was the nature of the philosophy which he taught. We cannot tell either how he came to give the apostle the use of his premises. Perhaps he had himself become a disciple; or he may have been prevailed on by some friend who was a disciple to show this courtesy to Paul; or he may simply have hired his hall to the apostle during the hours when it was not needed by himself.

It is interesting to note that here for a part of every day —unless when he was absent from the city — the apostle taught for two years; and we may have some idea of the ardor of his devotion to his work when we remember that he was also supporting himself by his handicraft, and that very often his pastoral labors extended far into the night; for he could say that he "ceased not to warn every one

night and day with tears."* Nor must we imagine that the sphere of his influence was bounded by the city walls. During these years the greater number of the seven churches, to whom through the Patmos prophet those celestial epistles were sent by the ascended Christ, were founded either by the personal labors of Paul or by the efforts of those whom he had been instrumental in converting. Unnoticed by the wealthy merchants of the city; unhonored by the learned among its citizens; sneered at, perhaps, by the haughty priests of the adjacent temple, our apostle commenced and carried on his work. It was the day of small things; but he held resolutely on. He did not care to be seen: he did not work for show. He was a great moral and spiritual sapper; and every day he taught he was, by the presentation of positive truth, undermining the foundations of idolatry, superstition, and iniquity. Nothing so excites our admiration about him as this quiet, humble, yet indomitable pertinacity. Nothing seems to put him out. Nothing elates him. But he keeps on working until both Asia and Europe come under the sweep of the influence of the Gospel.

In Ephesus he was especially blessed with the power of working miracles. I have, on former occasions, observed that this "gift" was not one which the apostles had under their own absolute control; but that only when by the direction of the Holy Ghost they were prompted to exercise it, were they warranted in seeking to perform a supernatural work.† Wherever, therefore, they wrought miracles, we may conclude that some special object was to be secured by such a manifestation of the divine power. Now in the case before us we may find, in the superstition prevalent in Ephesus at this time, a particular reason, not only for the working of miracles by Paul but also for the very unusual form which

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* Acts xx., 31.

† See *ante*, pp. 99–101, 132.

these miracles assumed. The historian tells us that from Paul's "body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." We need not wonder at miracles being performed through such means as handkerchiefs or aprons, for the power that works a miracle is always that of God, and it is all the same to him whether he puts it forth in connection with the word or touch of an apostle, or in connection with the passing of his shadow as in the case of Peter, or with articles of dress as here, or with the touching of the garment as sometimes in the history of Jesus himself. What is more to the purpose here, is to observe the rebuke which was addressed to Ephesian idolatry and superstition by the doing of such wonders. In no city then on the surface of the earth was sorcery so much practised as in Ephesus. The worship of Diana and the pursuit of magic were closely, almost indissolubly, associated. Mysterious symbols, called "Ephesian letters," were said to be engraved on the crown and girdle and feet of the image of the goddess. These letters, of which a specimen has been given by Lewin* and repeated by Kitto,† were not unlike the gibberish indulged in by modern professed conjurers. When pronounced, they were regarded as a charm, and were to be used by those who were under the power of evil spirits; when written, they were carried about as amulets. Howson mentions some curious stories regarding them; in particular, that Crœsus repeated the mystic syllables on his funeral pile, and that an Ephesian wrestler is said to have always thrown his antagonist until he lost the scroll which had been before like a talisman.‡ Now from these state-

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* Lewin, vol. i., p. 334.

† Kitto's "Daily Bible Illustrations," vol. viii., p. 443.

‡ Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii., pp. 13, 14.

ments we can see how it was that the miracles of Paul here took the shape which they assumed. As Moses did with the magicians of Egypt, he contended with the sorcerers on their own domain, in order that in the end it might be shown to all that they were impostors, and he the servant of the living and true God. They professed to do certain things through their charms; but wherever they were successful, their success was due not to the charm, but to their knowledge of occult science and their practice of sleight-of-hand. But greater things than they attempted were done through the instrumentality of handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched the body of Paul. This arrested the attention of the sorcerers. They thought at first that he was simply a brother of their own craft; and so Sceva, a Jewish exorcist, and his seven sons, conceiving the name of Jesus to be a spell like that used by themselves, tried it on an evil spirit with the words, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth;" but the possessed man leaped upon them and assaulted them, so that they fled naked and terrified. Thus the contrast between them and Paul was clearly brought out, and the magicians themselves were constrained to acknowledge that the power accompanying him was divine. Consternation and alarm filled them all; and such was the effect that those even among the believers in Christ who had been secretly indulging in magic came and confessed their evil-doings, and many of those who were sorcerers by profession brought their books on curious arts, which were both expensive and magnificent, and burnt them before the people. Nor was this an offering that cost them nothing; for when they reckoned the price of them, they found it equal to about ten thousand dollars of our money. "So," adds the historian, "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

The narrative over which we have come this evening is

rich in practical suggestiveness; but I restrict myself to one phase of its instruction. It brings before us four distinct classes of Gospel hearers, and shows us that the effects produced on each were determined by the disposition which they manifested.

We have first the case of partially instructed disciples, who eagerly welcomed greater light and were rewarded by a special benediction. Neither Apollos nor these Johannine disciples remained contentedly where they were when they had heard only the baptism of John. But when the former was informed of the real state of the case by Aquila, and the latter were enlightened by Paul, they gladly received the truth as it is in Jesus, and were baptized not only with water but with the Holy Ghost. Now, this readiness to accept new light ought to be cultivated by every student of the Scriptures. Whatever is brought out of these oracles by fair interpretation, or deduced from them by legitimate inference, we ought to receive and hold equally with that which we have already derived from them. It is often said, indeed, that theology is a finished science, and that no progress in it is now possible; but it seems to me that those who hold that opinion confound the source of theology with that which men have drawn from it. The Scriptures are complete. We are not to expect any addition to them; and if one came to us claiming to speak with the authority of inspiration, we should refuse to listen to him. We cannot look for additions to the sacred volume; but is it not right, and ought we not to look for an increase in our understanding of its meaning? Is not theology, in this sense, just as progressive as any other of the sciences? The stars have been in the sky from the day when first before the view of Adam,

> "Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
> Hesperus and the hosts of heaven came."

But what progress has been made since then in astronomy? So, again, the rocks beneath us have been just as they are now for many millenniums, yet what advancement have these last years seen among us in the science of geology? And in the same way, though the Bible is complete, and has been so for many centuries, may we not hope that the diligent student may still find something more in it than those who went before him have discovered? For there is sometimes an interpretation given by the very character of an age which naturally escaped those who lived before that age began; and the simultaneousness with which in many lands the doctrines of the Reformation flashed upon the minds of independent inquirers, analogous as it is to the fact that in physical science the same discoveries have been made by individuals in different countries almost at the same time, may help us to understand how new truths in theology may yet be found even in the already well-searched field of the sacred Scriptures. The pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers showed the spirit of a true Christian philosopher when he expressed his conviction that God "had yet more light to break forth out of his Word;" and though his words have been used by many when they advocated opinions for which I at least can find no foundation in the Bible, yet that must not keep me from acknowledging the soundness of the principle which they embody. We ought to be ready to welcome everything, even if it be a new thing, that is brought fairly out of this book. Let us not cry for novelty for its own sake; neither let us resist the new, simply because it is new. But if anything different from or in addition to our present interpretation of the Scriptures should be put before us, let us examine it candidly, and if it commend itself to us as revealed in the Bible or consistent with it, let us heartily accept it. None of us knows so much but that he may yet have the way of God more perfectly expounded to him; and true rever-

ence for the Bible will teach us all to seek to learn more from it.

But in the case of the Ephesian Jews we have an illustration of the blinding influence of prejudice in the hearing of the truth. They were at first very willing to listen to Paul; but as he went on with his expositions of their sacred books, so as to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, and that the blessings of salvation through him were not to be restricted to any nation, they were hardened, and believed not. Therefore he departed from them, and left them to their bigotry and intolerance. In the Johannine disciples we have an illustration of the law, "To him that hath shall more be given;" but in these Jews we see fulfilled the words, "From him that hath not shall be taken even that he hath." They who stubbornly refuse the salvation of Christ are in danger of being themselves put beyond the possibility of being saved by Christ. It is an awful thought, on which the preacher never delights to dwell; but it needs to be proclaimed, lest haply some one who is in fearful danger may go unwarned. Remember what is said of the barren fig-tree in the parable. It was placed in circumstances favorable for the bringing forth of fruit. Everything was done for it that could be done, and yet no fruit appeared, so that the command went forth, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" For a time the execution of that order was delayed at the vine-dresser's intercession, but at length the axe-stroke fell; and now, as one looks at Jerusalem, he sees but a poor blackened root, where once a stately tree covered the land with its shadow. My hearer, who despisest the mercy of the Lord, and rejectest the Saviour whom he reveals, take warning from such a case. As the good Leighton has it, "God may be taking his axe, as it were, and fetching his stroke at you, and you know not how soon it may light, and you be cut down, and cut

off from all hopes forever, never to see a day of grace more, nor to hear a sermon more; cut down and cast into the fire to burn, and that never to end. Oh, for some soul to be rescued, were it even now! Oh, to-day! 'To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' "*

In those vagabond exorcists who sought to turn to account, as a worldly speculation, the little knowledge of the Gospel which they had, we have another kind of hearers. They saw Paul casting out evil spirits, and immediately, after the fashion of Simon Magus with Peter, they came to the conclusion that if they could add the apostle's gift to their magical mummeries they would increase their gains. But the result only covered them with confusion. So have we seen it again and again in human history. When the Church wandered from the faith, and they who should have been its ornaments and defenders used their exalted position for purposes of personal aggrandizement, selling pardons for gold, and hawking indulgences through the streets, see how this incident repeated itself in a new form, and the people rose against their religious rulers much as this poor possessed one leaped on Sceva and his sons! This will always be the case, sooner or later, when the Church seeks to make gain for individuals out of the gifts which she has freely received from the Lord. For this is the law: "Freely ye have received, freely give;" and when the privileges of God's house are sold for gold, we may look ere long for terrible disaster.

But it is equally bad when men come to hear the Gospel just to see how much money they can make out of it. When, for example, they attend upon ordinances in a certain place solely because it will add to their position in society, or give them respectability in the neighborhood, or improve their

* "Works of Robert Leighton, D.D., Archbishop of Glasgow," p. 547.

business connection. All that is simony as really as is the selling of the cure of souls for gold; and in the day when the Lord comes to his temple, he will drive out all who are guilty of it with a scourge of cords. Avaunt, therefore, all ye who would make a gain of godliness! your hollow naming of "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" is an offence unto God; and even as you repeat the words there comes this voice from the very devil whom you serve, as if he were himself ashamed of you: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" Ah! is it not because so many to-day are trying to cast out devils for their own gain that they fail so egregiously in their efforts? The evils of our times will not recede before your Sceva mammon-worshippers and their like-minded sons; but only before the Pauls whose hands are clean, whose hearts are pure, and whose weapons are spiritual, and therefore mighty. It is not by a cabalistic name that we are to exorcise the evils of our times; but by holy characters moulded after the image of Christ, and animated by his Spirit.

Finally, we have in the Ephesian magicians an illustration of earnest, believing, and sincere hearing of the Gospel. I like to read about these men. They heard; they believed; they confessed; they repented. And their repentance was not of that cheap sort that spends itself only in tears. It was like that of the woman who, when she had heard a sermon on false measures, went straight home and burnt the bushel! These men did not care what it cost them. They were determined to be done with their evil calling, and they destroyed everything that might tempt them back to it again. They not only crossed the river, but they burnt the boats behind them, and so made their return impossible. They did not stand debating what shall we do? They did not say, Let us wait and see whether God will open up an honest way of life for us. They did not try to sell to others that

which they felt it was wrong for them to keep; but they utterly destroyed their books, and left God to take care of themselves. Now, my hearer, have you nothing to burn? There comes to my memory now a story, very graphic and characteristic, told by Mr. Arthur in his memoir of "Samuel Budgett, the Successful Merchant." Like other grocers of his time and neighborhood, he had been in the habit of adulterating his pepper by some sort of preparation—innocent enough, but not pepper, and not so valuable as pepper—which he kept in a little barrel labelled P. D.—pepper dust. But as he grew in Christian intelligence his conscience troubled him about this matter. It haunted him day and night, until one night he rose from his bed, went to his store, took the little barrel with him out to an old quarry, and there knocked in the ends of it and left it. In the morning, thinking he had been just a little wasteful, he went back, picked up the staves, and carried them away for other use; but that was the last of P. D. for him. Is there no P. D. about you? Nothing of which your conscience accuses you as inconsistent with loyalty to Christ? If there be, take it out as Budgett did, and knock it on the head. Bring it forth as these Ephesians did, and burn it before the Lord. Never mind the cost. That is nothing to your peace, your purity, your salvation. Therefore burn it; and then in your heart and in your home the word of God will grow mightily and prevail.

XVII.

THE UPROAR AT EPHESUS.

ACTS xix., 21–41.

DURING Paul's sojourn at Ephesus he made many new friends, and received visits from some old ones. Here first he became acquainted with Onesiphorus, of whose kindness, both now and during his last imprisonment at Rome, he makes such grateful mention to Timothy, and for whom he offers the brief but comprehensive prayer, "The Lord grant that he may obtain mercy of the Lord in that day."* Here, too, it is probable that he became instrumental in the conversion of Philemon and Epaphras, both of whom belonged to the neighboring city of Colosse. It is certain, also, that he wrote here his first Epistle to the Corinthians. Alford, on what seem to me, however, to be too slender grounds, has affirmed that some time during his three years and six months' residence at Ephesus, Paul made a hasty visit to Corinth, of which nothing is said in the Book of The Acts; but in any case it is clear that his first epistle to the church there was called forth by the arrival at Ephesus of Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, and certain of the household of Chloe, who brought with them a sad report of divisions and abuses in the infant society, and asked his advice on sundry matters of practical difficulty. In his letter he deals very plainly and powerfully with all the questions which had been submitted to him. He reproves the

* 2 Tim. i., 18.

Corinthians sternly for their partisanship for different preachers; shows them the inconsistency of the gross immorality which had been permitted among them; condemns them for going to law with brethren before heathen magistrates; gives them directions as to their intercourse with their unconverted neighbors; rebukes them for their irreverence at the Lord's table, and the confusion which characterized their public services; bids them above all other things cultivate love; exposes the hollowness of the argument of those who alleged that the resurrection was past already; and exhorts them to systematic benevolence, so that he might receive from them a handsome collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. It is truly a glorious epistle, standing before us in its mingled majesty and simplicity, like some Alpine range whose peaks seem to pierce the sky, while round its base the pine-forest waves in the breeze, and the wild flowers exhale their fragrance. There is the rugged sternness of reproof, shaded and softened by the verdure of affection. Broad and stable as the foundations of the everlasting hills are the principles on which his practical exhortations are based; and now and again, as when he speaks as if even he himself might be a castaway, he seems to put us on the edge of a fearful precipice, over which we gaze, as it were, into a bottomless abyss; while his hymn on charity and his argument on the resurrection are like great sunlit pinnacles rising up in purity and repose, and seeming to belong more to heaven than earth.

After he had written that letter he was most anxious to know the effect which it had produced on those for whom it was intended; and so he was very desirous to revisit Corinth. This is the point at which we resume the narrative to-night. We read,* "After these things were ended,

* Acts xix., 21.

Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome." His desire to go into Achaia was prompted by his solicitude for the Corinthians; his motive for visiting Jerusalem was that he might carry thither the offerings of the Gentile Christians for the relief of their Jewish brethren; and his wish to see Rome was not out of mere curiosity, but was in perfect harmony with the great principle which he had followed in his missionary work. Already from the three great centres, Antioch, Corinth, and Ephesus, he had sought to work upon the Greek-speaking portion of the Roman Empire, and it was natural that he should now long to commence in Rome itself, operations whose influence might ultimately radiate out into those western regions where the Latin language was spoken. Twice in his letter to the Romans has Paul referred to this deeply-cherished purpose; and that in such a way as to prove that, while the history in The Acts and the statements in the letter must have been written independently of each other, they are yet in perfect harmony. Let me read both passages to you, and then give you the substance of Paley's comment on them in connection with the history before us, as another specimen of the clearness and cogency of the argument of the "Horæ Paulinæ." The first passage is as follows:* "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." The second runs thus:† "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to

* Rom. i., 13. † Rom. xv., 23–28.

be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. . . . When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain." Now, argues Paley, the conformity between the history and the epistle is perfect. In the first passage of the epistle we find that a design of visiting Rome had long dwelt in the apostle's mind; and here in The Acts we discover that design expressed a considerable time before the letter was written. In the history we observe that Paul's plan was to go first through Macedonia and Achaia, after that to go to Jerusalem, and then to proceed to Rome. When the epistle was written, as we know it was from Corinth, he had already filled in that outline so far as Macedonia and Achaia were concerned, and was preparing to go to Jerusalem. But while thus the history and epistle are in perfect harmony, it is also perfectly clear that the one could not be made up from the other; for if the passage in the epistle was taken from the history, why was any mention of Spain made in it? and if the passage in the history was taken from the letter, how comes it that all reference to Spain was left out? Very clearly no impostor could have concocted those things, and the simplest explanation of them is their truth.*

Pending his own departure for Europe, the apostle sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia. The latter of these appears in the history here for the first time. There was an Erastus, chamberlain of the city of Corinth; and a person of the same name, very likely the same person, is spoken of in the Second Epistle to Timothy;† but we have no means of determining whether he is the individual referred

* Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ," chap. ii., No. 3.

† Rom. xvi. 23; 2 Tim. iv., 20.

to here. Paul despatched these brethren before him, in order, perhaps, to expedite the collection which he was making for the poor Jews from the European churches, so that he might be able to take it with him on his next visit to Jerusalem. He, however, remained a little longer in Ephesus himself, and his reason for doing so is given in these words:* "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." That is to say, he saw some great public opportunity of usefulness before him, and he stayed to take advantage of that, even though it might require him to face many adversaries; nay, all the more because it was all but certain that it would. Now, as the nature of this opportunity thus alluded to will help to explain the tumult of which an account is given in the history of Luke, it will be proper to set it clearly before you. Pentecost came seven weeks after the Passover; and so, as the Passover occurred in the end of March or beginning of April, seven weeks after that would include the larger part of the month of May. But that month was in Ephesus one of peculiar sanctity and splendor, and multitudes from all the cities of Asia crowded into it, to behold the spectacles and participate in the worship with which they were connected. What the Passover was in Jerusalem, or rather, perhaps, what the Carnival is now in Rome, that the month of May was in Ephesus. It was called Artemision, or Diana's month; and everything that ingenuity could devise was done to make it a season of pleasure and enjoyment, as well as a time of special adoration of the goddess. Ten men, called Asiarchs —or, as our version has rendered the word, "the chief of Asia"—were chosen annually from the principal Asiatic cities for the purpose of presiding over the games which

* 1 Cor. xvi., 8, 9.

were held during the month. They were generally selected for their eminence as citizens, and their known wealth and liberality. They had to bear the entire expenses of the *fête*, and such was the drain on their resources made thereby, that if a man had a family of five children he could claim exemption from the office; and no one could be compelled to fill it twice. In these circumstances we can understand how Ephesus would, during the sacred month, be thronged with strangers, and how Paul, always eager for the dissemination of the Gospel, determined to make it a sowing time among the people. He went to work, we may be sure, prudently as well as zealously; but the effects of his exertions were such as to rouse against him the opposition of one of the most important guilds in the city.

Under the shadow of Diana's temple, which was visited by worshippers from all the surrounding region, there had sprung up a brisk manufacture of silver models of the shrine of the goddess, which were sold to be worn as charms or set up in chambers, much in the same way as in some Roman Catholic places of pilgrimage, metallic representations of the Virgin, or of the saint more immediately honored, are disposed of to superstitious purchasers. These "silver shrines" were on sale all the year round; but the special harvest of the craftsmen was reaped in the month of May, when visitors came to the city from afar, and each was eager to take with him as a memorial of his visit, or as a gift to some infirm relative, a medallion which the priests had blessed. On this occasion, however, the demand was by no means so large as usual; and on investigation into the causes of the falling off in their trade, one of the leading manufacturers, Demetrius by name, was compelled to trace it to the labors of Paul. As soon as he came to that conclusion, he called his fellow-craftsmen—the first trades-union meeting of which we have any record—and in a few vigor-

ous words he contrived to arouse their devotion for Diana to a pitch of wild enthusiasm by an appeal to their self-interest. He reminded them that they depended on the making of shrines for their prosperity; pointed out to them that the doctrines which "this Paul" preached undermined the worship of Diana, and declared that if they ever came to prevail, the temple would be destroyed, and they themselves reduced to beggary. Thus identifying their pecuniary interests with their religious devotion, he so excited them on behalf of the goddess that they shouted, "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*" The noise thus produced speedily gathered a crowd; for nothing is more easy than to collect a mob, but nothing more difficult than to control one. On the present occasion the design of Demetrius evidently was to secure, by popular and irresponsible violence, a result which would, in his view, be for his own interest and that of his guild. Under the Roman government the murder or maltreatment of a Roman citizen would be sure to be investigated, if that were at all practicable; but if the evil were the result of an *emeute*, and could not be traced to any individual in particular, no one would be endangered. So the craftsmen left the mob to do their work, only indicating that Paul was to be assailed. It is probable that they went at once to the home of Aquila and Priscilla to seek him; and if we adopt that view, then it may have been on this occasion that these dear friends of the apostle risked their lives, or, as he phrases it, "laid down their own necks" on his behalf.* Not finding Paul, they caught Gaius and Aristarchus, who were known to be his friends and fellow-travellers, and hurried them off to the theatre, which, though constructed chiefly for gladiatorial exhibitions and dramatic entertainments, was the favorite place for public assemblies of all

* Rom. xvi., 4.

sorts. Large as that enclosure was—capable, as Mr. Wood, the most recent investigator, assures us, of holding twenty-five thousand people—its stone benches were rapidly filled by a tumultuous assemblage, of which the larger part could not tell why they were there, but were themselves increasing the confusion by continually shouting. Every one who has witnessed an excited public meeting composed of fiery spirits who are determined to refuse every speaker a hearing, and at which the densely packed multitude sways to and fro like the waves of ocean in a storm, while a continuous babel of sounds, earthly and unearthly, composed of cat-calls, cock-crowings, groanings, howlings, shriekings, and the like, is kept up, may form an accurate conception of what took place that day in the Ephesian theatre; for a mob is the same in all ages and in all countries.

When Paul heard what was going on, his first impulse prompted him to go at once and take his place beside his friends, that they might not suffer in his stead; but the disciples around him, anxious for his personal safety, sought to dissuade him. It is questionable, however, whether they would have succeeded in that, if it had not been for the advice of some of the Asiarchs that were friendly to him. It speaks well for Paul, and not ill for them, that these men, who were at once the furnishers and rulers of the festival, were kindly disposed toward him. Either they had been convinced by his arguments "that they be no gods which are made with hands," but, Nicodemus-like, were unwilling to declare themselves; or on simply personal grounds they were interested in him, and sought to keep him from danger; or perhaps they wanted only to prevent a breach of the peace. But their entreaty prevailed, and he did not go to the theatre. Meanwhile, as the tumult went on, the Jews who resided in Ephesus being afraid that they might be blamed for the whole affair, although they were as much

opposed to Paul as Demetrius was, put forward one called Alexander—supposed by some to be the coppersmith alluded to in the letter to Timothy—that he might exonerate them. But beckon as he might, the multitude would not listen to him; nay, as they recognized his Jewish features, they became more furious than ever, and kept up their shouting for two hours on end, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Of course that could not go on forever. Men's throats are not of brass, neither their lungs of leather; so at length there came a lull, when one of the magistrates of the city took the opportunity of speaking a few quieting sentences. He is called in our version "the town-clerk;" but although he kept the records of the city, his office in other respects was liker that of mayor among us than town-clerk. He was the proper president of all their popular assemblies, and indeed, under the proconsul, the chief magistrate of the city. This will account at once for the respect with which he was listened to, and the authority with which he spoke. His address was exceedingly adroit, and shows that he well knew how to deal with a multitude of excited citizens. He began with a compliment to their goddess, whose image fell from heaven, and of whose temple the city to which they belonged was the willing and devoted "sacristan."* Then, having gained their attention by this apparent concession to their enthusiasm, he bade them be on their guard against rashly making accusations which they could not substantiate by legal evidence. He affirmed that the men whom they had dragged into the theatre had not been guilty of anything which they could construe into sacrilege, and had not been heard to speak against their favorite goddess. Then, referring to the ringleader of the riot, he alleged that if he had anything to complain of in

* In the original *νεωκόρον*; literally, "temple-sweeper."

the matter of his craft, the right redress was to be had in the courts of law presided over by the proconsul, and for the holding of which regular days were appointed. But beneath the velvet glove thus ostentatiously held out there was an iron hand, of which one little squeeze was given as a gentle reminder that they were under the inflexible Roman power. He told them that the proper place for discussing public matters was the lawful assembly; and with a reference to the lawlessness of their present gathering, which was sufficient to make them prudent at least, if not afraid lest they should be called in question, he dismissed them to their homes.

Now, here two things call for attention. In the first place, we are struck with the testimony borne by the mayor to the wisdom with which Paul had prosecuted his work at Ephesus. He had not made any quixotic attack on the special idolatry of the place, but had contented himself with enforcing the positive truth about the spirituality and omnipresence of God. He had neither said nor done anything which, even in the estimation of the idolaters, could be construed into sacrilege or blasphemy of Diana. Rather he had here, as at Athens, viewed the idolatry of the people as a finger-post pointing to something higher, nobler, purer than itself. Doubtless, if he had cared to pry into the mysteries of the temple, he might have found some terrible abuses; but the exposure of these would only have irritated and aggravated the people, while still the central evil would have been untouched. Therefore, with consummate wisdom he let Diana alone, and contented himself with preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, leaving that to filter its way into the minds of his hearers, sure that in the end they would turn from "lying vanities to serve the living and true God." This example is full of significance for all who are called to act as missionaries, either in heathen lands or in countries

where a corrupt form of Christianity prevails. Controversy, indeed, is not without its uses; but it tends for the most part to stiffen each of the debaters in his own opinion, and it excites antagonism fully more frequently than it produces conviction. While the storms beat about the traveller, in the old story, he drew his cloak more tightly round him; but when the sun shone strongly on him, he threw the mantle aside. So if we can introduce the truth without controversy, we may rely that it will expel the error, just as the admission of the sunlight into our chamber dissipates the darkness which formerly reigned within it. The statement made by the Lord to the woman, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," makes no direct attack on any concrete form of heathenism, and yet its acceptance makes idolatry for the individual impossible. In like manner, the presentation of the doctrine of justification by faith makes no controversial assault upon the ritual of Romanism; but yet, wherever that doctrine is believed, penance and the mass immediately lose their hold upon the heart. He who assails the worship of the Virgin in a Roman Catholic country may be—very likely will be—silenced at once; but he who exalts Christ as the only Saviour may be permitted to go on long enough to lodge truths in the hearts of the people which shall become mighty forces among them in after-days. It is easy to denounce and expose evil, and an immediate notoriety will be sure to reward him who enters upon such a course; but, after all, that does not reform it. Nothing but the introduction of positive truth will avail for that; and therefore he is the wise propagandist who keeps himself mainly to that. There will be a stir at length; but then the stir will be made by the truth, not by the man, and there is an immense difference between these two effects. The one is transient, the other is enduring. The one awakens reproach, the other secures vindica-

tion even from men who, like the Ephesian recorder, are themselves, nominally at least, on the side of error.

The second thing to be noted here is the exact correspondence between the representations made in the narrative before us, and the inscriptions which have been recently brought to light by the excavations of Mr. Wood. First, as regards Diana: This goddess appears on these inscriptions as "the great goddess Artemis;" and sometimes as "the supremely great goddess." She has her priestesses, her temple curators, her divines, her choristers, and the like. Her birthday is again and again mentioned. She is seen and heard everywhere; so that there is no exaggeration whatever in the picture which Luke has painted.

Next, as to the theatre: That appears from Mr. Wood's inscriptions to have been the recognized place of public assembly. There edicts were proclaimed, and decrees recorded. There, too, were memorials on every hand of the greatness of the goddess, so that, as Canon Lightfoot has said, "If the town-clerk had desired to make good his assertion, 'What man is there that knoweth not that the city of Ephesus is sacristan of the great goddess Diana?' he had only to point to the inscriptions which lined the theatre for confirmation. The very stones would have cried out from the walls in response to his appeal."*

Again, as to the name temple-keeper, or sacristan, given here (*νεωκόρον*) to the city of Ephesus, we find in these inscriptions for the first time a direct use of the same term in the same application; for on one of the newly-discovered stones the city of Ephesus is described as "twice sacristan of the Augusti, according to the decrees of the senate, and sacristan of Diana." In like manner, the use of the term

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* See article in *Contemporary Review* for May, 1878, on "The Acts, illustrated by Recent Discoveries," by Canon, now Bishop, Lightfoot.

sacrilege here is explained by an inscription found in the theatre, though not yet set up at the time when the recorder spoke, in which these words occur, "Let it be regarded as sacrilege and impiety." It thus appears that certain offences were treated as constructive sacrilege against the goddess.

The same correspondence appears in the political references. Three distinct officers are mentioned in the narrative of Luke, namely, the proconsul, or "deputy," as it is in our version; the recorder, or "town-clerk;" and the Asiarchs, or "the chief of Asia." Now all these appear, as we are told by Lightfoot, again and again, in the newly-discovered inscriptions. "Sometimes two of the three magistracies will be mentioned on the same stone. Sometimes the same person will unite in himself the two offices of recorder and Asiarch, either simultaneously or not. The mention of the recorder is especially frequent. His name is employed to authenticate every decree, and to fix every date."* So, again, the meaning of the term, "a lawful assembly," as denoting one of those held on stated days already specified by the law, in contradistinction to those called on special emergencies out of the ordinary course, is illustrated by an inscription found in the theatre, providing that a certain silver image of Athene should be brought and "set at every lawful assembly, above the bench where the boys sit." Thus the most recent discoveries of the excavator at Ephesus, as at Cyprus, confirm in all respects the truthfulness of the sacred narrative. Nay, we may go farther still, and affirm with the learned canon, to whom already I have been so largely beholden, that "ancient literature has no picture of the Ephesus of imperial times—the Ephesus which has been unearthed by the sagacity and perseverance of Mr. Wood—

* Lightfoot's article, as before.

comparable, for its lifelike truthfulness, to the narrative of Paul's sojourn there in The Acts."*

But now, leaving the mere antiquities of our theme, let us seek to carry away with us some of its valuable lessons.

And, in the first place, let us note how self-interest tends to pervert the judgment. The great Scottish poet has said,

> "When self the wavering balance shakes,
> It's rarely richt adjusted."

And an acquaintance with our own hearts, as well as the observation of the actions of others, will amply confirm his words. "A gift blindeth the eyes;" but the same influence is no less powerfully exerted by the prejudices engendered by one's trade or profession. We can scarcely expect that the holder of a comfortable sinecure or of a government office will become an ardent advocate for retrenchment or civil service reform. The self-interest of the employer is apt to prevent him from being perfectly just to the employed; and the workmen, on the other hand, are hindered by class influences and combinations from fully realizing the position of the master. It would require a great stretch of candor in one who is a dignitary of a State church to see any advantages in disestablishment; and the minister of the Gospel who is liberally supported by his own people can scarcely give an unbiassed opinion on the arguments of those who maintain that there should be no paid pastors. Observe, I am not now saying a word as to the truth or falsehood of the different opinions on such questions. I am only remarking on the difficulty which those who are pecuniarily interested in their settlement must have in coming to a thoroughly unprejudiced decision regarding them. This difficulty is recognized in all civil trials by the exclu-

* Lightfoot's article, as before.

sion from the jury-box of those who are personally interested in the verdict that must be given, and we must all admit that we are in danger of being thus biassed. We cannot call each other bad names about it, for we are all alike.

But we cannot deny, either, that self-love is as really a principle of our nature as benevolence or justice. What the Word of God insists on is, not that it should be destroyed, but that it should be enlightened. It must not be blind to the rights of others; nor must it have respect to the body, or money, or this world merely. It must take in the wide range of spiritual matters, and weigh everything in the balance of eternity. The corrective which the Gospel administers to it is in that pregnant question of the Lord, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Now, taking eternity and the immutable principles of truth and righteousness into account, what the world calls selfishness inflicts the greatest injury on him who practises it; while that which it styles self-sacrifice is only a larger thoughtfulness and the truest self-love. The Saviour's paradox is indubitably true: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."* But, notwithstanding this, the great majority among us prefer the present to the future, the temporal to the eternal. A genuine truth-seeker—a real truth-follower, who cleaves to it whithersoever it may lead him, is about the rarest as well as the noblest of men; and the most striking testimony which in this mammon-worshipping age a man can give of his sincerity, is to resign a large pecuniary benefit rather than keep it against the protest of his conscience. Yet, after all, there is no loyalty to God where one prefers his interest to his duty, and lets a

* John xii., 25.

piece of gold hide from him the truth over which it is laid. Let us, therefore, cultivate devotion to truth in our allegiance to Him who said, "I am the Truth;" and when we feel tempted, like Demetrius, to let worldly profits come between us and it, let us widen our view, and take eternity into the account. So shall we attain a right estimate of temporal things, and rise into the clear, dry light of unprejudiced inquiry. When the natural philosopher would be precise in his experiments, he performs them beneath the exhausted receiver of an air-pump, so that the atmosphere may have no influence; and in like manner, when we would prosecute our inquiries in the great department of moral and spiritual truth, we ought to conduct them beneath—shall I call it—the exhausted receiver of the Word of God, away from the pressure of the world's atmosphere, and as matters between ourselves and Jehovah.

But we may see, in the second place, that it speaks ill for a trade when its prosperity is destroyed by the progress of the Gospel. Many trades have been quickened by the conversion of communities to Christ. The progress of our missionaries in some parts of central Turkey has caused quite a demand for American ploughs; and the Christianization of heathen tribes always increases their trade with civilized nations; so that for every dollar expended in foreign missions the country gets at least ten back in increased commerce. But there are some trades that cannot thrive where the Gospel succeeds, and hereby we are furnished with a clear and well-defined test, which every man can apply for himself, and by the application of which he may discover whether or not he is in a lawful calling. If, while I am praying for success in my business, I have the clearest evidence that it can succeed only by retarding the progress of the Gospel, then my duty is clear, and at whatever sacrifice I must leave that trade. If, while I am praying "Thy king-

dom come," I have the conviction that it can only come by crippling and ultimately destroying my business, then surely there can be no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that I ought to leave off that business. There are only two ways of it. Such a trade will either smother the Christianity of the man, or his Christianity will destroy his trade, and lead him to give it up. The two will not hold together. Now there are such trades. I do not need to name them. You have already mentioned them within your hearts, and if you are in one of them, get out of it at once.

We may see here, thirdly, that a time of excitement is not favorable for determining duty. These Ephesians were suffering from temporary madness; and any conclusion which they might then come to would be dangerous. The "town-clerk," therefore, gave them good advice when he said, "Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly." Now we need not be above taking the counsel of this heathen magistrate. When we are in a passion, which we should be as seldom as possible, we ought to defer deciding on the matter which has provoked us until our calmness has returned. It is always a good rule to hold over a thing of that sort. Let the irritation subside; let reason, which is for the moment dethroned, resume its sway; let God's forgiveness be asked, and his direction sought in earnest prayer, then gravely, deliberately, and soberly let us do as he may indicate. Never decide on any course when you are excited by anger. If something have occurred to destroy your equilibrium, and you feel you cannot restrain your wrath, then sit down and write a letter to him who has been the cause of your anger, put into it all that you feel, make it hot and strong, so that your soul is thoroughly relieved by telling him thus a piece of your mind, then fling it aside until the next day. When you open your desk in the morning, read it and see what a fool you were; then put it into the fire, and

let it and your wrath both burn together. After that, decide what you shall do, and you will acknowledge the truth of the old proverb, "There's luck in leisure." The captain who insists on going to sea in the midst of a hurricane is foolhardy; but he is equally demented who insists upon deciding important questions when he is in a passion. For one, I desire to express my indebtedness to this Ephesian town-clerk for the valuable advice he gave. I have never followed it without advantage, and it would have been better for me if I had followed it more frequently. When you are in danger of letting your temper overmaster your judgment, call to mind this history, take counsel with the town-clerk of Ephesus, and "do nothing rashly."

Finally, we may see here what calmness is secured by him who possesses conscious rectitude and faith in God. In this terrible tumult the apostle continued to be thoroughly composed. He seems the least excited man among them all. He was ready to brave the danger, if need were; but he was calm enough also to see the wisdom of the advice given by his friends. Now, how shall we account for this inner peace in the midst of such outward riot? Simply by the fact that he had a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, and was well assured that, living or dying, he was the Lord's. There was One beside him, mightier than the mob, and he was sure of his protection; for to be on the side of God is also to have God on our side. I cannot but think, too, that he was sustained and soothed by his faith in the glorious immortality that was before him. You may remember how, in his sublime argument on the resurrection, he says, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" and though, as we have seen, the letter in which these words occur was sent from Ephesus before this riot, and there could, therefore, be no reference

in it to this particular tumult, yet the truth which sustained him on former occasions, and specially on that—whatever it was—which he calls a fighting with beasts, would sustain him now. The most they could do with him was to kill him, and that would only introduce him into the immediate presence of his Lord. Thus their worst was his best; and when we realize that, we see in a moment the secret of his calmness. Now, cannot we secure this same peace by loyalty to conscience and faith in Jesus? Oh, it gives a manly erectness to the soul when one can hold up his head thus above the threatenings and opposition of the multitude, and say with our apostle, "With me it is a small matter to be judged of you, or of man's judgment, yea, I judge not mine own self; there is one that judgeth me, even God;" nay, humanity does then "show likest God" when, firm in the consciousness of rectitude, and strong in confidence in Christ, it stands unmoved amid the tumults of the people, bidding them calm defiance, and realizing the picture of the poet:

> "As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Seek to have this purity of conscience and this firmness of faith; for he may well confront the howling multitude, or brave the dungeon and the stake, who is assured of these three possessions—a good God, a good conscience, and a good cause.

XVIII.

THE DOCTRINAL EPISTLES.

ACTS xx., 1–16.

IN the opening verses of the twentieth chapter of the Book of The Acts we have a condensed summary of the journeyings of Paul during a period of about twelve months. But by a diligent use of the materials incidentally furnished in some of his epistles, we are able to fill in very largely the interesting details over which the historian passes without either specification or remark. As we have already seen,* Paul had three things in his purpose: first, to go through Macedonia and Achaia; second, to go to Jerusalem; and third, to visit Rome. When, therefore, he left Ephesus, it was not in consequence of the uproar, or because he was afraid of his life, but simply in fulfilment of his design. His departure was neither hasty nor stealthy; but as formerly, at Corinth, he called the brethren together, and addressed and embraced them before he set out. About the same time, also, we may infer that Aquila and Priscilla left Ephesus and went to Rome; for they were in that city when, nine or ten months later, the Epistle to the Romans was written."†

According to the statement of the historian, the apostle, before the occurrence of the Ephesian riot,‡ had sent on Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia in advance of himself; and, as we conclude from a passage which we shall presently quote, Titus had been despatched direct to Corinth some

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* Acts xix., 21. † Rom. xvi., 3. ‡ Acts xix., 22.

time previously, that he might learn what effect the First Epistle to the Corinthians had produced, and bring back a report to Paul. The company which left Ephesus with the apostle, therefore, would probably comprise Gaius and Aristarchus, who belonged to Macedonia, and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were natives or at least residents of Ephesus.* They did not proceed to Neapolis direct by sea, but made for Troas, the place hallowed to Paul by his vision of the man of Macedonia, who cried, "Come over and help us!" Our information concerning this visit is derived from a passage in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,† which is to the following effect: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."

Now here some very instructive and some very touching things come out. In the first place, we note with interest that Paul found a promising field of usefulness at Troas; and he must have cultivated it with diligence, for, on his return to the place some months later, we find a large and eager congregation waiting on his ministrations. To one familiar, as perhaps we may suppose that Paul was, with those grand old Homeric ballads that "tell the tale of Troy divine," there would be many things of antiquarian interest in that locality; but all these were secondary, and subordinate to the great object which the apostle had before him. To him a living man was of more importance than a buried city; and his absorbing work was to preach Christ to the perishing.

But, though everything at Troas was encouraging, we are rather surprised to find that Paul was restless in spirit, and

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* Compare Acts xx., 4, with xix., 29. † 2 Cor. ii., 12, 13.

had little heart to stay. One reason for that was, because his mind was greatly exercised about the state of the Corinthian church, concerning which he was tempted to fear the worst, because Titus had not yet returned, as had been arranged, to inform him of the effect which his letter had produced. We should err, however, if we supposed that his depression of spirit was caused by anxiety for that one church. On the contrary, he saw in the divisions of Corinth, taken in connection with the controversy which had arisen formerly at Antioch, and the state of things which had developed among the churches of Galatia, the great coming danger of the Church of Christ. The question, as Howson has well remarked, was rapidly becoming this: "Is the Church of Christ to degenerate into a mere Jewish sect? or is it to be a spiritual and universal society, open to every one who believes in Jesus?"* and as the apostle saw his ritualistic adversaries following him everywhere, and sowing the seeds of discord and of error, we may understand his distress. "What!" does some one say, "Paul burdened with anxiety, and made restless by suspense!" Yes, it is even so; for, though he wrote "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus;" he was not a perfect saint, and did not always act upon his own exhortation, or live up to his high privilege. But in justice to him, let it be marked that his restlessness of spirit was not about himself, but about the Church. Like Eli, he "trembled for the ark of God;" and though the source of fretting and worry is always unbelief, yet it is a nobler thing to be concerned for the purity of the Church than for one's own safety.

* Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii., p. 91.

It is to be remembered, too, that in Paul's case, there were physical as well as spiritual causes for his despondency. He had been uninterruptedly engaged for three years, almost night and day, in Ephesus, in wearing and fatiguing work; and all who know what mental toil is, especially when, as in the pastorate, there are constant demands made upon the sympathies, will admit that his physical constitution must have been considerably unstrung. Add to this the fact that he had just passed through a very severe illness; for he writes,* "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." Now, whatever that illness was, it had been evidently very alarming; and when we take that into consideration, and remember the strain to which he had been subjected in connection with the Ephesian uproar, we shall more readily comprehend how he came to be in such distress.

But, however we may explain his restlessness of spirit, we must add that it was sorely rebuked by the result; for, as we shall presently see, when Titus did meet him in Macedonia, he brought such a report as at once relieved his mind and gladdened his heart. Thus Paul had been all the while tormenting himself, so far as the Corinthians were concerned, about that which never occurred! But who among us is guiltless of the same sin, or may righteously cast a stone at him for his weakness? We are all prone to anticipate evils, and to vex ourselves needlessly about things which either may not happen or will not happen. We make crosses for ourselves by meeting things before we come to them; and more than half of our perplexities we manufacture for ourselves out of presentiments that are never realized. We go

* 2 Cor. i., 8.

through the gray dawn of the morning, saying, like the women on the way to the sepulchre, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" and when we come up to it, we find that it has been already removed. We are continually disquieting ourselves as to how we shall cross the river; and when we reach it, we find a ford or a ferry, or perhaps even a bridge. Ah, how God reproves our faithlessness and our fear, by letting us see that he has arranged all things for us beforehand, so that they work together for our good! Whosoever among you, therefore, is troubled or perplexed, let him trust in the Lord. Let him, in the expressive language of the Hebrew prophet, "stay upon his God." Worry is not only useless, but it is needless and unbelieving; for the Lord careth for us, and would have us be without carefulness. Why, then, should we torment ourselves even with present troubles, to say nothing of those which have not yet made their appearance? Beautifully has one sung:

> "O Lord, how happy we should be,
> Could we but cast our care on thee,
> If we from self could rest!
> If we could feel that One above,
> In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
> Is working for the best."

Unable to rest at Troas, Paul pushed forward to Macedonia, judging that Titus would return from Corinth by that route. As before, he would sail over to Neapolis, and then proceed to Philippi; and we may easily imagine with what feelings of gratitude and affection he would greet the brethren who had repeatedly cheered him by ministering in a most substantial manner to his wants. But in spite of the fellowship of these friends, his anxiety remained; for he says, in the letter already quoted from, "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled

on every side; without were fightings, within were fears."* Poor Paul! why should he have had these "fears within?" He was not perfect, after all. In the loftiest attributes of his character, he so towers above us that we despair of reaching the altitude which he attained; but in his moments of weakness he comes very near us, and we love him in the latter just as much as we admire him in the former.

At length, however, Titus arrived, and brought with him the report that the members of the Corinthian church had manifested, on the whole, a Christian spirit; had cast out the impure person from their fellowship; and had given Titus himself such a welcome as to show that the great majority of the converts were still heartily attached to Paul, and to the doctrines which he had taught. These tidings lifted at once the load from the heart of the apostle. His spirits recovered their wonted cheerfulness, and his step regained its elasticity, so that he could write, "God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more."† But Titus brought also the information that there was still a small minority in the church who resisted Paul's authority and repudiated his teachings. It would seem that this party was composed chiefly of Jews; for in referring to them the apostle says, "Are they Hebrews? so am I;"‡ and it is likely that they were ranged under a particular leader; for in at least one passage Paul speaks as if with pointed reference to some well-known individual.§ This heresiarch was probably a man of commanding presence and eloquent utterance, who

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* 2 Cor. vii., 5.
† 2 Cor. vii., 6, 7.
‡ 2 Cor. xi., 22.
§ 2 Cor. xi., 3.

set himself by every means in his power to undermine the influence of the apostle, and was not above turning to account for that purpose the insignificant appearance and hesitating speech of Paul.* It would appear, also, that he went so far as to deny the apostleship of Paul. In these circumstances, though he was glad to hear the report which Titus brought concerning the condition of the church as a whole, he felt that he could not visit it personally until he had given a full exposition and vindication of the position which he held. Hence he wrote, probably from Philippi, the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which we have so many interesting autobiographical details, and by which he has irrefragably demonstrated his apostolic authority.

It consists of two portions easily distinguishable from each other. The one is addressed to the humble, docile, and penitent members of the church. The other is directed to those who sought to undermine his influence and overthrow his doctrines. In the former we have a manifestation of his gentleness, as he labors with almost tearful iteration to remove any painful misunderstanding which might have been produced by his former letter. In the latter we have a specimen of his sternness, as with scathing irony and withering logic he exposes the insinuations and demolishes the arguments of his antagonists. The epistle thus presents two opposite aspects of the apostle's character—to wit, his affectionate yearning over those whom he recognized as the friends of the Lord Jesus, and his uncompromising antagonism to those in whose enmity to himself he saw only the development of their hostility to Christ. With this two-sidedness, it resembles a mountain, which in the one direction slopes gradually down into a lovely valley, furnishing pleasant pasture for the "nibbling flocks;" and in

* 2 Cor. x., 10, 11.

the other is a sheer basaltic precipice rising in rugged abruptness from the deep defile, and frowning like a fortress on every beholder. It gives more details of his spiritual experience, and more particulars of his missionary adventures than any other of his epistles, and crowns the list of personal allusions with that description of his mysterious elevation to paradise, and its equally mysterious sequel—the thorn in the flesh — which have exercised and baffled the ingenuity of interpreters in every age. It lacks the systematic arrangement of his more doctrinal letters; but in the eager nervousness of its appeals there is something that is suggestive of the earnest solicitude and painful suspense out of which it was produced; and no one can read it without feeling his heart go out in loving response to its author.

With this letter he sent Titus,* and two deputies whose names are not mentioned, but who are thus alluded to:† "We have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind. . . . And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you." The motive for his sending these brethren, however, was not simply that they should be the bearers of his letter, but also that they might expedite the collection which he was desirous of making among the Corinthians for the poor saints at Jerusalem. And as this is perhaps the most appropriate opportunity which we shall have of adverting to that subject, we shall devote a few minutes to its consideration.

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* 2 Cor. viii., 16–18. † 2 Cor. viii., 18, 19, 22.

At the meeting of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, after the settlement for the time of the circumcision controversy, the "pillars"* requested Paul to remember the poor; and though he had always been forward to attend to them, his heart was now specially set on carrying a generous contribution from the Gentile churches to the destitute members of the church at Jerusalem. Probably there was at this time particular need for such assistance; for, like India and China to-day, Palestine was liable to famines from drought, causing wide-spread suffering both in want and disease. But, altogether irrespective of considerations of mere humanity, Paul wished by this gift to do something which might produce a better feeling between the Jewish and non-Jewish elements of the primitive church. He saw, with profound sorrow, the breach which was daily widening between the two; and though, for the truth's sake, he was constrained to oppose the Judaizers, yet he wished, in some tangible and effective manner, to show his own love for his kinsmen according to the flesh, and to manifest the interest which the Gentile converts felt in their brethren at Jerusalem. This could be best done by a pecuniary offering to the necessitous among them, and therefore he stirred up his friends in the cities of Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia to make contributions on their behalf. Judging from the references in his letters to this subject, and from the names of those who went with him to represent the Gentiles in Jerusalem, we infer that the scheme was taken up by the brethren in Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Derbe, Ephesus, and Corinth.

The mode in which he advocated this collection, and the measures which he took to secure that there should be neither suspicion nor dissatisfaction in the case, are alike remarkable. It was to be a voluntary offering; but to induce

* Gal. ii., 9, 10.

them to give more liberally, he begs the Corinthians to remember that "God loveth a cheerful giver;" that "he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully;" and that, since God had sent them spiritual blessings through the Jews, it was meet that they should in return minister to the Jews in temporal things; yet though he refers in glowing terms of unqualified universality to the benefits which their sincere liberality would secure to them, he is careful to put uppermost the great, all-dominating Christian motive in these words: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."*

The manner in which he wished the collection to be made was that of weekly storing. As he has said, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."† This was a plan which would make their benevolence, as Howson‡ admirably observes, "equally remote from the excitement of mere popular appeals, and the mere impulse" of instinct. It suggested that each member of the church should have a private storing-place, into which, every Lord's-day, out of love to Him whose resurrection that day commemorated, he should put a sum according "as God had prospered him;" and that when Paul came these should all be brought out and given to certain persons approved by the church, who should accompany him to Jerusalem and hand them over to the elders there. This method, therefore, was not precisely that which is usually called the weekly offering among us; for it was not a public giving in connection with the services of the church, but a private storing at home; and I cannot help observing that if each of us were to have in his closet a benevolent fund, to which

* 2 Cor. viii., 9. † 1 Cor. xvi., 2. ‡ Vol. ii., p. 123.

he added a portion every Lord's-day, and the whole of which he regarded as God's, while he accepted for himself only the responsibility of dividing the entire amount among the various objects brought before him, we should all know far more than we do now of the luxury of giving.

The measures which Paul took for the administration of these funds were the following: Each church was to choose one or more deputies into whose hands the contributions were to be placed, and the whole company of these delegates were to go with Paul to Jerusalem. The apostle was exceedingly guarded in this matter. It was not enough that he should not be accused of any malfeasance; it was indispensable that he should not be even suspected, and so, as far as appears, he never touched the smallest coin that was collected; for thus he writes:* "Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." Accordingly, in the names mentioned in the section of history now before us,† we have representative men from many churches; while Luke, who joined the band again on the return of Paul from Corinth to Philippi, was most probably the deputy from Philippi.

These details are something more than interesting. They are exceedingly instructive, and furnish us with an example of benevolence, of system, and of wisdom, which we may profitably follow.

But, returning from this digression, and resuming the history of the apostle, we find that after Titus had gone to Corinth with the second epistle, Paul went—so we read in Acts xx., 2—"over those parts and gave them much exhortation;" that is to say, he visited once more Thessalonica and Berea, and exhorted the churches in these cities. But he also widened his sphere of operations, so as to include

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* 1 Cor. xvi., 3. † Acts xx., 4.

places which he had never before visited. We infer so much from a statement made by him a few months later, in his Epistle to the Romans,* to the effect that "from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ." Now, Illyricum was the province next to Macedonia; and the only opportunity he had of entering that district prior to his writing of the letter in which the above statement occurs, was that of the interval between his landing in Macedonia and visiting Greece as here recorded.

After this tour, having allowed, perhaps, three months to elapse from the date of his second letter to the Christians there, he went to Corinth. He anticipated some little unpleasantness on his arrival, and was prepared to deal firmly and faithfully, if need be also sternly, with the disaffected party; but we are not anywhere informed of the issue, and cannot tell whether his presentiment was verified or falsified by the results. If, however, we may take the letter of Clement, written many years after, as giving an accurate description of the state of the church at this time, we may believe that the wise fortitude and Christian tact of the apostle were of great service in restoring its peace and maintaining its purity. These are Clement's words: "Who that visited you did not admire your sober and gentle piety in Christ? for ye did all things without respect of persons, and walked in the laws of God, obeying those who were set over you; and ye were all humble-minded, subjecting yourselves rather than subjecting others. Thus a deep and blessed calm was diffused over all, and an insatiable longing for well-doing, and a plentiful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. All faction and all schism was detestable in your sight."

* Rom. xv., 19.

But, however Paul might be engaged with the Corinthians, it was, according to the belief of the best critics in their city, and at this time, that he wrote two of his most important letters. Messengers came to him from Galatia detailing to him the grievous condition of the churches in that province, torn as they were by dissensions caused by the same Judaizing emissaries who had troubled Corinth, and he at once transmitted to them that epistle with which we are all so familiar.

Struck out of him by his discovery of the fact that everywhere the enemies of the Gospel were on his track seeking to undo his work, this letter has a vehemence which is peculiar to itself. Beginning with an autobiographic vindication of his apostolic position, he passes on through the history of his contention with Peter to a close and compact argument designed to prove that, by the deeds of the law, no flesh living can be justified. Then he proceeds to unfold the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. He declares that, inasmuch as the Gospel was virtually preached to Abraham, the law of Moses could not annul it; and he concludes with a series of pertinent, practical appeals. As we can trace the marks of volcanic fires on the rocks which some great convulsion has upheaved, so we can clearly discern the effects of Paul's inner feelings in the style and argument which he has here employed. Indignation at the troublers; sorrow, surprise, and displeasure at the conduct of his old friends; yearnings after their return, interblended with dissatisfaction at their departure from the faith; scorn at the accusations which had been brought against himself, and deepest anguish at the dishonor which had been done to Christ—all these emotions were simultaneously at work within him, and we can see the traces of them all in the letter itself. The "arrows of its thoughts" are "headed and winged with flame." It is characterized by passionate

energy, scathing invective, rapid movement, parental tenderness, and condensed power. It is logic on fire, and its arguments scorch those who refuse to be convinced. As Douglas of Cavers has said, "The mind of Paul [in it] is rapid as the lightning, and yet strikes, by its zigzag impetuosity, every projecting point that approaches its path; and, still undelayed by these deflections, attains instantaneously the goal."* The sternness of its reproof, however, as many of its passages attest, is but the other side of love; and even its personal references are to be accounted for by his longing for the return of those who had gone back, by his zeal for the purity of the Gospel, and by his enthusiastic devotion to the cause of Christian liberty.

About the same time he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, whose origin may be thus accounted for. He found in the neighboring church of Cenchrea a devout woman—Phœbe by name—who was about to proceed to Rome on some business of her own;† and he availed himself of the opportunity to send with her a letter to the Christians of that city. It is true that he had not himself founded the church in the metropolis, and indeed had not, up till this time, visited it; but, as we may see from the numerous salutations with which the epistle concludes, he had many friends among its members, and we need not wonder that, after the news which he had just heard from Galatia, he was exceedingly desirous to save them from the danger of being imposed on by the adversaries who had wrought such havoc elsewhere. Accordingly he sent them that letter, wherein argument and experience, instruction and exhortation, doxology and benediction, are so admirably interblended. It may be regarded as the elaboration of the argument which is briefly epitomized

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* Quoted by Dr. John Brown, in his "Discourses on the Epistle to the Galatians," p. 10.

† Rom. xvi., 1.

in the Epistle to the Galatians. As Lightfoot has expressed it in his own clear-cut fashion, "In the Galatians the apostle flashes out in indignant remonstrance the first eager thoughts kindled by his zeal for the Gospel, striking suddenly against a stubborn form of Judaism. To the Romans he writes at leisure, under no pressure of circumstances, in the face of no direct antagonism, explaining, completing, extending the teachings of the earlier letter, by giving it a double edge against Jew and Gentile alike."* It is not so much a letter as a treatise; and if we may compare inspired productions after such a fashion, we may say that it is the most original and massive of the apostolic epistles. It has at once the solidity and the completeness of a pyramid. Looked at from afar, it seems to be smooth and inaccessible in its outline; but when we approach it, we discover a series of successive steps up which we may climb with a little effort, and after we have reached the summit a whole landscape of truth is unfolded to our gaze. Its logic is relentless, as it concludes all men under sin; but its love is limitless, as it declares that we are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What a depth of experience does the seventh chapter describe as we hear him cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" How like the lark, again, he ascends in the eighth chapter, singing as he soars until he reaches the very gate of heaven! What wisdom he evinces in the handling of the deep things of God's government! And what a blending of love with faithfulness there is in the manifold exhortations with which he concludes! Truly a marvellous and unique epistle, to be compared to no other literary production, but standing out in solitary grandeur like some Gibraltar rock, with its

* Lightfoot, on "The Epistle to the Galatians," p. 49.

galleries and batteries fortified for the defence of a whole continent of truth.

After three months' labors in Achaia, and just on the eve of the Jewish passover, Paul prepared to leave Corinth ; but learning that a plot had been concocted to take away his life, he changed his route at the eleventh hour, and instead of going directly by sea to Syria, he went round through Macedonia to Philippi, whence he sent his companions forward to Troas, but he himself stayed with Luke for a few days longer. Then, taking with him "the beloved physician" —from whom henceforth he was scarcely separated until his death—he took ship, and after a tedious voyage of five days he joined his friends at Troas. Here he remained for seven days, the last of which was the first day of the week, hallowed by its association with the resurrection of the Lord. Even at that early date, the custom had begun for believers to assemble on that day for the observance of the Lord's-supper ; and on this occasion Paul preached. We know his theme would centre in Christ, but the circumstance that his discourse was a parting one filled his heart with tenderness and affection, and he felt as if he could not leave off. He " continued his speech until midnight ;" and out of that came an accident which might have had a fatal termination. The congregation was assembled in an upper room. There was a large company, and there were many lamps. This made it needful to open the windows, or lattices, for ventilation. On the sill of one of these windows, which was not much higher than the floor of the room, a young man named Eutychus sat. Under the influence of the glare of the lights and the poison in the atmosphere, he went to sleep, and fell into the court from the third loft, or story, of the house. When they lifted him up he seemed dead ; and my impression from the narrative is that he was actually dead. But Paul went down, stretched himself upon the body after the

manner of Elijah, and declared that his life was in him; then, returning to the upper room, he resumed his discourse, which continued till daybreak.

In the morning his companions took ship, and, rounding a promontory, came to Assos; but Paul, wishing perhaps a lonely walk, that he might commune with his own heart and have fellowship with his Lord, went the twenty-three miles on foot; and being taken on board by his friends again, he coasted along first to Mitylene, and thence by Samos to Miletus, where for the present we must leave him.

Reviewing, for practical purposes, the course of our exposition this evening, we note, in the first place, Paul's concern for the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. He would let nothing interfere with that. He proclaimed salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus, and pronounced in his Galatian letter a solemn anathema on all who should attempt to overlay, or tamper with, or destroy the precious doctrine of justification by faith. Now, the danger in our days, unless I greatly misread the signs of the times, is of a similar sort. In our zeal for liberality we are becoming latitudinarian, and forgetting that there is a point where, paradoxical as it may sound, intolerance is necessary even in the interests of freedom. Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans were written for the preservation of liberty; for in one of them he says, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" and yet, for the very purpose of maintaining that liberty, he hurled his anathemas at the Judaizers' heads. Let us not forget that the Gospel has its intolerance as well as its toleration. We may, and we should, exercise the fullest forbearance in minor matters, but there must be no toleration of treason to the Cross, for the toleration of such treason is always treachery. I say not, indeed, that all such errors should be put down by force —God forbid; but I do say that they should be denounced

by every loyal servant of the Lord, and that the Church should absolve itself from all complicity with the errorists. And though there are many who would cry out against such a course as bigoted, I would rather, even in the interests of freedom itself, have—if you choose to call it so—the bigotry of Paul than the indifference of him who counts nothing essential, and who is everything by turns and nothing long. Luther was no foe to freedom, but indeed its greatest modern pioneer; and in the proportion in which, like him, we are intolerant of everything that compromises the honor of Christ or the doctrine of his cross, we shall conserve and widen the liberty which he did so much to secure. So, let us raise anew the shout of Paul, making it our motto, not for the moment of our brief enthusiasm merely, but for all our lives, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

But we note, secondly, Paul's zeal for the purity of the Christian life. At first sight it might appear that the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith without the deeds of the law would loosen the bonds of morality; and, indeed, as we may see from the argument in the letter to the Romans, it had been alleged that his teachings would lead men to say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." But such a perversion of his instructions is warmly repudiated by the apostle, and he shows most clearly, not only by the argument of his sixth and seventh chapters in that letter, but also by his dealings with the Corinthians concerning one who had been guilty of an abominable offence, and by the practical precepts in which all his epistles abound, that he is not opposed to good works, but indeed an ardent advocate for them when they are put in their right place. He insists, however, that their right place is not the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God, but the grateful outcome of our love

to God, who has already accepted us for Christ's sake. So regarded, he is "zealous of good works," and uses every proper motive to stimulate us in the performance of them. He declares that we are to be justified by faith alone; but then he is careful to bring out that the faith which justifies is a faith which worketh by love. And in this we have the principle of harmony between him and James. Luther, indeed, could never be persuaded to accept the epistle of James as inspired, because it seemed to him to run counter to the doctrine of Paul; and he called it, therefore, an epistle of straw. But that was because the valiant reformer did not go quite round the subject; for had he done so, he would have seen that, while Paul dwells mainly on the ground of the sinner's justification, and affirms that works can never furnish that, James is arguing on the nature of faith, and alleges that the faith which justifies is not a mere make-believe, but a living thing whose vitality is shown by its works. Paul says we are justified by faith, and James contends that the faith which justifies must not be a dead thing—a faith without works—but a faith shown by works; and for that, as we have seen, Paul is as zealous as James. In short, to borrow the admirable illustration of Arnot, the two apostles are contending with different antagonists. They are like two men set upon at once by assailants from opposite directions. Thus they stand back to back, and strike out in opposite ways, but they are themselves in perfect harmony; and the Church is safe only when she teaches with Paul, and works with James. So let us be earnest in our cultivation of holiness, that we may show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Finally, we cannot help touching on Paul's earnestness in the development of liberality. He was not ashamed to speak about a contribution, and he brought the highest motives and the shrewdest wisdom to bear upon this matter. Would that he were among us again, to instil into us the

great principles concerning giving which he has laid down in his letters; for the Church has never yet developed, to any proper extent, its money power, and its failure in that respect helps very largely to account for the comparatively small progress it has made in the evangelization of the world. In this city alone there are every year expended on the single article of strong drink somewhere about fifty millions of dollars—a sum which is far in excess of the aggregate annual income of all the great missionary societies in the land; and yet when an appeal is made for contributions in our churches, the members count it an affliction instead of a privilege, and give too often grumblingly and by constraint. Now, this would not be the case if we had a sufficient realization of our obligation to Christ for our personal salvation, and if we adopted some system for the regulation of our gifts. We look upon the whole matter of making contributions as if it were a merely optional thing; whereas in truth it is required of us by the most sacred obligations, and ought to be regarded by us as one of the regular and normal forms of Christian activity. Nay, more, we cannot forget that throughout the letters to which this evening I have been referring, Paul speaks of the contribution to the Jewish saints precisely as he speaks of the Lord's-supper—as a communion. It ranks thus, in his regard, as on a level with the highest form of Christian worship; and they who disregard it are dishonoring Christ, while at the same time they are depriving themselves of one of the greatest privileges, for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Brethren, let us think on these things, and so long as we are receiving, let us be willing to communicate, remembering these verses of accumulated universalities: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. . . . Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

XIX.

THE PARTING ADDRESS.

Acts xx., 17–38.

MILETUS, once the capital of Ionia, was situated on the Latmian Gulf, opposite to, and in a direction due west from the mouth of the winding Meander. It was about thirty-six miles from Ephesus; and though the filling up of its harbor by the soil washed down by the river had greatly interfered with its commerce, it was still, in the apostle's day, a place of some importance. As he coasted along from Chios to Trogyllium, and passed the mouth of the Cayster, it was impossible for Paul to forget the friends whom he had left in Ephesus; but he could not stay to visit them then, for he had resolved to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost. Finding, however, that the ship had to remain at Miletus for a few days, he sent to Ephesus and requested the elders of the church there to come to him. They gladly responded to his invitation, and when they had come, he delivered to them the address which is to form the subject for exposition this evening. Luke seems to have preserved it for us in the very words in which it was originally given; for we find in it turns of expression and modes of thought which we frequently come upon in the apostle's letters. But, altogether apart from such coincidences with his other productions, it has a quality which is peculiar to itself. For depth of pathos and fervor of appeal, it seems to me to be well-nigh unrivalled even in Holy Writ. It quivers all through with emotion. There is love in every

sentence, and a tear in every tone. We cannot read it without a choking utterance and a moistened eye; and when we reach its conclusion, we do not wonder that those to whom it was first addressed "wept sore, and fell upon his neck and kissed him." Indeed, such is our appreciation of its exquisite tenderness, that it seems to us to be almost too sacred for exposition; and we fear to say anything in illustration or enforcement of its meaning, lest we should destroy the impression which the mere perusal of it must always produce. But the topics which it suggests are so important, and the example which it gives is so sublime, that we are constrained, even at the hazard which we have mentioned, to enter somewhat fully on its consideration.

It may be arranged under four divisions, namely, a retrospect of his own labors at Ephesus; a prospect of the trials and difficulties that lay before him; an exhortation to the elders in regard both to themselves and to the church under their care; and a commendation of them to God and to the word of his grace. But though these divisions are clearly enough marked, they are not thoroughly maintained. You cannot confine emotion between any methodical lines. It is not like a canal which is capable of embankment, and may be carried forward in straight lines along a carefully surveyed route, but rather like a river which runs now with rapid current, now with deep and noiseless flow, and which ever and anon turns back upon itself in meandering "links," while yet its course in the main is onward. It will not be possible, therefore, while observing the order of topics which I have announced, to take the verses in their original sequence; yet I may be able so to present to you the substance of the discourse itself, that you may see very deeply into the heart of him who spoke it.

Let us take then, first of all, his retrospect of his Ephesian ministry; and here I place in the fore-front his refer-

ences to the character of his teachings. They are such as these: "I have gone among you preaching the kingdom of God;" "I have taught you publicly, testifying to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And in speaking of the great design of his ministry, he sums it up as consisting in this: "To testify the gospel of the grace of God." Thus he declared the good news of God's love as righteously shown to sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ; he proclaimed that men should change their minds toward God, and in order to move them to that, he set before them the evidence of God's love to them, in the gift of his Son for their salvation. In this way, by bringing them to faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, he led them also to repentance toward God; and when they thus returned to him, he taught them that they entered into that kingdom of which he is the head, and which is "not meat nor drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." These were the truths the preaching of which, being accompanied by the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power," effected such results that sorcerers burnt their books of magic, and renounced their deeds of deceit; and gave such a blow to idolatry as filled Demetrius and his craftsmen with alarm. I do not mean to allege, indeed, that for three years his discourses were nothing but a continuous repetition of the fact that salvation comes to men through faith in Him who hath redeemed us with his precious blood, but rather that he sought always to unfold the principles which underlie the Cross of Christ, and to apply them to the circumstances of his hearers. He did not restrict himself to certain conventional forms of speech, or ring the changes on some recognized formulæ of doctrine; but whatever he touched, he touched with the Cross, and so connected it with Him who died thereon, as to bring his love as a constraining motive,

either for its repudiation as dishonoring to him, or for its observance as tending to his glory. Thus the doctrinal and the practical were inseparably interblended; and the Christ whom he preached was the Life and the Light of men.

In this presentation of the Saviour the apostle was conspicuous for his tenderness. He served the Lord among the Ephesians "with many tears;" and again, "he ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Dauntless hero as he was when he needed to stand forth as the champion of the truth, his heart was yet full of compassion for the ignorant and them that were out of the way. But his tenderness was no mere sentiment, for it was the result of his faith; and having learned the value of his own soul, he was eager to keep others from that shipwreck from which there is no salvage. Thus his very love to men stimulated him to be faithful with them. Hear him again: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." "I ceased not to warn every one." To a superficial observer it might seem that fidelity and tenderness are incompatible with each other; but when we go deeper down we discover that in the noblest natures the one is the root out of which the other springs, and when the two exist together, the combination is as beautiful as it is effective. With most of us it is either all tenderness or all sternness; but when the most awful denunciations of sin come from one who is known to be gentle and affectionate in his character, there is a power in them which no trick of elocution can simulate; and when the kindest expressions come from one whose uncompromising principle will not let him sacrifice truth to amiability, there is a genuineness about them which lifts them as high above the conventionalities of po-

liteness as heaven is above earth. But with these apparently opposite qualities there was combined in our apostle a deep humility; for he tells these elders that he "served the Lord with all humility of mind." He did not work for his own glory. He sought no honor or place or preferment for himself. There was in his heart no jealousy of others; nor could any one charge him with seeking to depreciate any of his fellow-laborers, or grudging them the recognition that was their due. Of course the man who said to Titus, "Let no man despise thee," would not allow others to trample upon himself. But he never set up the honor of men as an end in itself; and he was not always looking after his dignity. He never cared to speak about himself save when his own vindication was essential for the defence of the truth; for that with him was uppermost, and everything was subordinated by him to his service of the Lord.

Again, we must not fail to note the industry of the apostle's Ephesian pastorate. He "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." He taught them not only publicly, but "from house to house." He studied the case of each individual, and went to each with words in season. Without intermission and without reluctance he labored on for the space of three years, that he might keep himself pure from the blood of them all. Thus his love for souls was the mainspring of his assiduity, as it was also of his faithfulness; and as we read the record of this incessant toil, we are constrained to say how rarely we have seen on earth a ministry —I will not say equal to, but worthy to be put in comparison with this of Paul at Ephesus. Now and then we come upon a Chrysostom, a Bernard, a Calvin, or a Baxter, who may almost bear to be placed beside the great apostle; but the majority even of the most eminent pastors are put to shame by the record of this ministry. "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not

to warn every one night and day with tears." Well says the good Adolphe Monod, "I read this verse again and again. I am never weary of recurring to it. In these tears of love I see the Christian to the very centre of his being; I perceive the apostle to the very end of his career. 'By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day with tears.' What a description! There is not a feature in it which does not tell. 'Three years, without losing even one of the days which he had spent at Ephesus from the beginning of his sojourn until the end—so much for the time! 'Night and day,' refreshed or fatigued, in safety or in peril, in season or out of season—so much for opportunities! 'I ceased not;' without relaxation or interruption—so much for perseverance! 'Every one,' not only of the elders of the church at Ephesus, but of its members—so much for persons! 'With tears'—so much for charity!"* As we linger thus over the touching details, may the Holy Spirit quicken us, and dispose us to the same unreserved consecration of our lives to the work of Christ! Oh for the living fire from the altar, that we may have enkindled within us the zeal of Paul and of his nobler Lord, who said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work."

But we must not lose sight of the heroism of the apostle's ministry. He had "trials which befell him by the lying in wait of the Jews." He labored constantly with his life in peril. Repeatedly have we seen how he was assailed by the enemies of the Cross of Christ; and the graphic account which Luke has given us of the Ephesian riot enables us to understand the reference which he has here made to the dangers to which he was exposed. Besides, we must not forget that it was during his residence in Ephesus that he

* "St. Paul," by Adolphe Monod, as before, pp. 58, 59.

wrote the letter in which these words occur: "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" "I die daily;" and again, "After the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus."* Now, whether we understand this fighting with beasts literally, or take it as a figurative description of the conflicts with adversaries in which he was engaged, there is enough in it to indicate the sort of antagonism which he was called to meet. Nor was it only from open attacks like that which Demetrius headed that he was in danger. The Jews were plotting against him after their stealthy fashion, and he knew not when or where they might spring a mine for his destruction; yet he held on at his work, not needlessly provoking his adversaries, nor timidly neglecting his duties on their account, but calmly prosecuting his steady round of labor, not quite as if they were not there, but rather in the consciousness that there was with him One who was mightier by far than all they that were against him, and in the faith that there was before him a "crown of righteousness that fadeth not away."

Once more, we mark the disinterestedness of Paul's pastorate. He sought no earthly property or worldly gain from all his labors. His own hands during these years had ministered to his necessities, and he could say, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." To the Ephesians as to the Corinthians he might have written, "I seek not yours but you;" and the only wealth he cared for was that which has been finely called "property in souls."† He had the right, as he is careful to let the Corinthians know, to receive from those whom he taught in the Word a suitable maintenance while he labored among them, but for certain local and temporary reasons he chose to forego that

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* 1 Cor. xv., 30–32.

† See "Sermons on Living Subjects," by Horace Bushnell, D.D.

claim at Ephesus, as he had done before at Thessalonica and Corinth; and so, throughout those three years, he supported himself by his trade as a tent-maker. Now, if to all his pastoral labors we add his toil at his craft, we shall stand amazed at the magnitude of the work he did, and marvel how one body—and that, too, frail and feeble at the best—could endure it all. He did break down, as we saw in our last discourse, under its weight; and for so much of his toil as contravened the laws of his physical nature, he is not to be commended, but rather to be blamed, for overwork is just as wrong in a Christian apostle as in an ambitious merchant, or a brain-burdened editor, or a benevolent physician. Yet we may not forget that Paul's self-sacrifice was for the highest interests of others, and not in any sense for his own aggrandizement; and there seems little danger in these days that many should hurt themselves in imitating him. In any case, the bare contemplation of such a devoted, disinterested, and industrious life puts us all to the blush. May it also quicken us to renewed energy, that at the last we, too, may be able to take men to record that we are "pure from their blood."

But we must now look at Paul's prospect of the trials and difficulties that were before him, and the expression which he gives in this address to his feelings in reference to them. He describes himself as going "bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem;" and though it is uncertain whether his words refer to the Holy Ghost or to his own spirit, yet the meaning in either case must be that his present journey was made under a sense of duty so strong that no influence whatever could induce him to give it up. He was firmly convinced that it would be wrong for him not to go at this time to Jerusalem; and so, without conferring "with flesh and blood," he held on his course. And yet, from sundry intimations made to him, he was led to anticipate the coming upon him

of some calamity, for he adds, "Not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." Certain things had been told him by the prophets in some of the churches which he had lately visited, even as we shall find that similar warnings were given him in Tyre and Cæsarea; but they were vague and indeterminate, specifying only that he should be imprisoned. They did not particularize that he was to be two years detained at Cæsarea; that he was to be almost the whole of another year in making a voyage to Rome; and that for two years more he was to be in bonds in the imperial city. Enough was told him to put him on his guard; but in mercy to him God did not permit him to know all, lest peradventure he might have been discouraged. As it was, there was no misgiving in his soul, for he says, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Sublime words, these! the native force of which would only be marred by any attempt on my part to make them plainer than they are. The sneering Satan once said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" and some have done him the honor to say that when he so spoke he told the truth for once. But they are wrong. He has found out very frequently since that there are some men who cannot be measured by his bushel. Even Job would not purchase his life by cursing God; and the three Hebrew youths who braved the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar subordinated their love of life to their allegiance to Jehovah. Daniel, also, counted not his own life dear unto him, that he might enjoy the privilege of prayer; and to this illustrious roll must be added the names of Peter and John and Stephen and Paul, and "the noble army of martyrs" in every

generation. These all recognized that there is something grander and more glorious by far than the life of the body, and were content to let their earthly existence go that they might keep their loyalty to their Lord.

Let it be noted, too, that this declaration of Paul comes out, as it were, incidentally. It has no special emphasis given to it, as though it was exceptional. In point of fact, it was not out of the common course of his utterances. He was always on the altar; and this was no mere phosphorescence which shone for a moment and went out into the darkness, but rather the steady flame of that fire of consecration which was constantly burning within him. This was no mere brilliant rhetoric struck out of him by the excitement of the hour, and characterized by exaggeration. Rather it was but the reading off to the Ephesian elders of that purpose which had been long graven on his heart, and the sincerity of which was proved by the events of his after-history.

But now, passing from Paul himself, let us consider the counsels which he tenders to the Ephesian elders. He bids them take heed to their personal character and to their public duties. Spiritual efficiency in the ministry depends to a large extent on what the minister is himself; and so his first duty is to "take heed" to himself. The power of a man's words is determined by what the man is, a great deal more than by the manner in which he says them. Even a heathen philosopher declared that the first requisite for an orator is that he should be a good man; and the noblest eloquence in the pulpit is the efflorescence of the life of the preacher. Rhetoric without holiness is but tinsel; but where holiness is, it may be safely left to itself to find its own expression, and in that, whatever it be, there will be power. Besides, it is not to be forgotten that the life of the preacher is itself a sermon. He is in some sort a representative

man, and both in the church and out of it others regulate themselves by his conduct; therefore he should be specially on his guard. It may not be of much consequence that the light of an ordinary chamber window is darkened; but if the lamps in yonder twin-towers upon the Highlands should be unlit even for a single night, some dreadful shipwreck may be the consequence. Like such a tower, the minister occupies a public and exalted position. He is set, like his Master, for the fall and rising of many; and he ought to show himself an example of meekness, humility, purity, and integrity. Blessed is that church whose pastor, after saying, like Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things," can add, like him also, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."*

The official counsels tendered to these elders are contained in the phrases, "take heed to all the flock," "feed the church," "watch," "warn;" "so laboring, ye ought to support the weak;" and they all point to the fact that every individual in the church was to be appropriately cared for. The rich were not to be attended to while the poor were neglected; the young were not to be instructed and the aged forgotten; the sick were not to be visited while the healthy were ignored; but each was to be personally known and dealt with according to his character and necessity. Those who were going dangerously near the world were to be warned in love and faithfulness; those who were insubordinate were to be reproved; those who had been backsliding were to be gone after and, if possible, reclaimed; those who had been overtaken in a fault were to be restored in the spirit of meekness; those who were weak were to be

* Phil. iv., 8, 9.

strengthened; and those who were suffering from want were to be provided for, out of regard to Him who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Very suggestive is it, also, to note the motives by which these exhortations are enforced. They are such as these: because they had been made overseers by the Holy Ghost; because those over whom they had been set had been purchased by the Lord* with his own blood; and because special dangers were even then threatening their charge. "I know this," says Paul, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Subsequent events clearly showed that the apostle's fears were not unfounded; for he warned Timothy, when at a later date he was at Ephesus, of certain men "who spake lies in hypocrisy, and had their consciences seared with a hot iron; forbade to marry, and commanded to abstain from meats which God had created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."† In the same letter mention is made of Hymeneus and Alexander,‡ whom Paul had delivered unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. In after-years,§ Cerinthus, supposed to be from Alexandria, promulgated his heresies even before the face of the apostle John; and in the epistle to the Church of Ephesus, which is incorporated in the Book of Revelation, its members are exhorted to return to their first love, and warned against the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which was declared to be abhorrent to the heart of Christ.‖ The fear lest these

* The reading, "the Church of the Lord," is preferred by most critics; though there are weighty arguments in favor of "the Church of God."

† 1 Tim. iv., 2, 3.

‡ 1 Tim. i., 20.

§ See "Paul the Preacher," by Rev. John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., p.337.

‖ Rev. ii., 1–7.

things, of which perhaps Paul had already seen the germs among them, should gain strength, and choke the true life of the Church, made him earnest in enforcing the counsels which he now addressed to the elders, yet how delicately and affectionately he puts them on their guard! Indeed, his own dealing with them here was itself a pattern of the kind of pastorate which he wished them to aim after, having in it all those elements of warning and instruction, tenderness and fidelity, precept and example, which he desired them to cultivate; and often, during his long imprisonment, they would recall his words, and animate each other anew by a rehearsal of their conference with him at Miletus.

But now the time drew near when they must part; and as there was no place so appropriate for the saying of farewell as the mercy-seat, and no act so fitting in connection with it as that of prayer, "he kneeled down and prayed with them all." We have no record of the supplications which he offered, but they would be without doubt an expansion of the touching adieu (in the literal sense of the term) expressed in the words, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." As they felt depressed by the weight of the responsibilities which had been laid upon them, he would seek for them the help of the Lord; and as they sorrowed "most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more," he would seek for them all a happy reunion in that heavenly home where they should all be partakers of "the inheritance of the saints in light." Then, the prayer ended, they "accompanied him unto the ship," and as the vessel bore away they gazed with wistful eyes after it until it was lost to sight on the far horizon.

I cannot conclude without seeking to give point to two practical lessons suggested by some things in this narrative.

In the first place, we may learn that we ought, at every sacrifice, to prosecute the work which Christ has given us to do. Paul's highest ambition was that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Now, it is true that in the fullest sense of the word he was called to an apostleship; but the humblest among us, in some department or other, may witness for Christ. The Son of man has given "to every man his work." There is enough for us all, and there is a special sphere for each. One may find his place in the Sunday-school; another in the mission field; another, like Harlan Page, in Christian correspondence; another in the home; and another in the pulpit; while we are all called everywhere to bear to him the potent testimony of a holy life. But whatever our individual "course" may be, our aim should be "to finish" it "with joy;" and nothing should be permitted to move us from our obedience to our living Lord, so that at last, like our apostle, we may be able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Let us not imagine, however, that this can be done without conflict or sacrifice. Paul had to encounter many dangers, to endure many hardships, and to do battle with many adversaries; and we may not look for exemption from such things any more than he. We are ignorant of the future; and we have to say every day of our lives that we know not what shall befall us, yet we may be sure that obstacles of some kind must be met and overcome by us. They may not be such bonds and afflictions as awaited Paul in Palestine and Rome; yet it is written for us as well as for others,

"In the world ye shall have tribulation;" and again, "All that will live godly must suffer persecution." In some way or other, therefore, we shall be made to know Christ "in the fellowship of his sufferings." So let us prepare to meet antagonism with the same calm courage with which Paul contemplated the conflicts that were now before him. We serve the same Master as he did; we may rely on the same help as he received; and the same glorious reward as he is now enjoying, is in reserve for us. For though, perhaps, he was peculiar in the nature and degree of his trials, he is by no means singular in his experience of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, in fact, but one of a whole multitude who have testified to the faithfulness of Jesus in the keeping of his promise to succor his followers in the hour of need. I have spoken of the thrilling nobleness of that sublime utterance, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy;" but the records of Christian history have other sayings not unworthy to be put side by side even with that. When William Tyndale—name ever to be held in honor by all who read our English Bible—was told that the bishops had publicly burnt all the copies of his New Testament on which they could lay their hands, he calmly wrote, with a too sure presage of his after-fate, "In burning the New Testament they did none other things than I looked for; nor more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall be so;" and that he was prepared for that was amply proved that day at Vilvorde, when, standing at the stake, he cried, "O Lord, open the eyes of the King of England!" So, too, when John Calvin—whose intellect was so pre-eminent that we are apt to lose sight of his devotion to Christ, and enthusiasm in his cause—was menaced with violence, he grandly said, "If this is what we have deserved at the hands of men whom we have struggled to benefit—namely, to be

loaded with calumny and stung with ingratitude—then this is my voice, 'Ply your fagots!' but we warn you that even in death we shall become the conquerors, not simply because we shall find, even through the fagots, a sure passage to that upper and better life, but because our blood shall germinate like precious seed, and propagate that eternal truth of God which is now so scorned and rejected by the world." And, lest you should imagine that these cases also are exceptional, because of the prominence of the work which was done by those noble men, I would remind you of others in more recent days. The records of the Indian Mutiny contain many instances of native Christians, and of English soldiers—some of them hardly out of their boyhood—who could not be moved to abjure Christ by the most exquisite tortures which savagism could devise; while the story of the Madagascar Church, as told by Mr. Ellis, has chapters in it which, in point of Christian heroism, raise this nineteenth century to a level with the first. Nor is this all. There are among ourselves martyrs in humble life who are daily exposed to sacrificial flames of which no one knows fully but Jesus; youths who brave all manner of insults rather than renounce their allegiance to their Lord; wives who bear meekly the bitterest taunts rather than be disloyal to Christ; husbands who carry in secret the weight of living crosses, whose burden is all the heavier, and whose nails are all the sharper because of their love to those who form them; workmen who face continually a whole battery of scorn rather than do what their divine Master has forbidden. Blessed be God, the spirit of Paul is living yet! because the Lord of Paul still lives to make strength "perfect in weakness." Hold fast, ye tempted, struggling, and afflicted ones! the victory is already yours. You have a happiness unknown to your antagonists; and louder than the noise of your assailants, you may hear your great Captain's

words as they come floating down to you from the throne on which he sits, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Ah! if we had that crown more fully in the view of our faith-eye, we should all find it easy to say with Paul, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

But we may learn from this whole scene, in the second place, that believers should at critical times commend their friends to the fostering care of God. When Paul parted from these elders, he felt that the best thing he could do for them was to commit them to the word of God's grace. Now, it would be well for us, in similar circumstances, to follow this example. When we are in sorrow ourselves, let us lift up our hearts unto God; and when we know that others are in distress, then is the time to bespeak God's favor for them. Especially is this true of those manifold partings from friends over which hangs the shadowy uncertainty that we may see their faces on earth no more. When, for example, the lad leaves his father's house and is about to proceed to a distance to prosecute his studies, or to enter upon business in the midst of many temptations, what can be more appropriate than for his father or his mother to take him to some place apart, and there commend him "to God and the word of his grace?" When, again, we tread the deck of the vessel, and are about to embrace for the last time the loved ones who are going for long years to a foreign land, and we know not if we shall ever meet them again on earth, what can be more consoling both to us and to them than to whisper, if our sobs will let us, this tender adieu, "I commend you to God and the word of his grace!" When some dear friend is in deep waters, and we feel our impotence to help him, because a crushing weight

is lying on his heart which no other man can touch, what a relief to us, and what a benison to him it is to be able to say, "I commend you to God and the word of his grace!" It is impossible to tell what comfort and strength may come to the tried and stricken one through the oft-recurring remembrance of words like these fitly spoken. When Thomas M'Crie, the biographer of John Knox, was setting out as a lad from his country home for Edinburgh, there to enter upon his first session of university life, his mother went with him for a portion of the way; and when at length they came to the place where they had to part, she took him into a field by the wayside, knelt down with him behind a stock* of standing corn-sheaves—for it was the time of harvest—and fervently besought for him the blessing of the Lord. His son tells us that he never forgot that prayer; and that its influence for inspiration and for strength was with him through his life. And if I may be permitted to refer to my own history, I recall with peculiar vividness at this moment the last evening at my father's fireside before I set out for college life. I had never been away from home for any length of time before; a great city like Glasgow was, to a boy brought up in a provincial town, full of perils; and so a strange commingling of joy and trepidation was in my heart. After family worship my father took me with him into his own place for secret prayer; and as we knelt together, he put his hand upon my shoulder, and poured out his heart for me before his God. I think I feel that hand upon my shoulder now; and looking back through the years of the past, I can remember many times when the memory of that prayer was a solace, a stimulus, a support. It has been better to me than would have been the legacy of a millionnaire; and if some similar home-scene should by my words be brought

* *Scottice*, "stook."

even now before any of you who are yet "strangers from the commonwealth of promise," let that plead with you to-night to bring you to the Lord! Never, be sure, did these Ephesian elders forget the supplication with which Paul concluded this beautiful address. Never will your boy forget the prayer which you breathe beside him when he is going out into the world; and as the loved native land fades out of sight, the lonely voyager, as he paces the deck of the ship, will still keep in his heart the remembrance of that latest cry you addressed to God on his behalf. He will live on it through years of separation; and wherever he is, there will hover over him that bright inheritance among all them that are sanctified, cheering him on, and beckoning him upward. What a blessing it is to be the means of thus encouraging the feeble! What a comfort it is, when we are feeble, to be thus encouraged! And when the last parting time draws on, when death comes to steal our senses and to shut our sight, and we know that we are going the way whence we shall not return, it will be enough if some one near will whisper these words of Paul, "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Oh the glory and the gladness of that ecstatic moment, when, seeing face to face, we shall be satisfied in God's own likeness! For you and for myself, dear friends, may there be such an entrance ministered abundantly into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

XX.

MILETUS TO JERUSALEM.

ACTS xxi.

LEAVING Miletus, the apostle and his fellow-voyagers made direct for Coos, or Cos, an island about twenty-one miles in length and six in breadth, which lay along the coast of Caria. Its chief town was about forty miles due south of Miletus, and the vessel arrived there in the evening. The next day they reached the island of Rhodes, which, as Kitto has quaintly put it, "looks like a large piece broken off from the south-west corner of Asia Minor, and lying only nine miles from the nearest point of its coast."* It was anciently celebrated for its schools, for the flourishing state of the arts and sciences in it, for its commerce, and for its ship-building. A colossal statue of Apollo, reared over its harbor—not bestriding it, according to the popular but erroneous idea—was long regarded as one of the wonders of the world; but before the date of which we are now speaking, it had been overthrown by an earthquake, and "the legs only, as high as the knees, retained their upright position, while the rest of the gigantic mass lay extended along the margin of the port."† The maritime importance of the place may be inferred from the fact that it lay on the verge of the two basins of the Mediterranean, and became an intermediate point for the eastern

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* Kitto's "Daily Bible Illustrations," Evening Series, vol. iv., p. 457.

† Lewin, vol. ii., p. 99.

and western trade.* The next port at which they arrived was Patara, at the mouth of the river Xanthus, where was a famous temple of Apollo. Here, either because the ship in which they had come thus far was going no farther, or because it was chartered for another destination than that to which they were bound, the apostle and his companions left it, and embarked in another vessel which was just about to sail direct for Tyre. Their course lay across the Gulf of Tarsus, requiring them, when they sighted Cyprus, to keep it on the left, and with ordinarily favorable weather they might and probably did, make the passage in little more than forty-eight hours. The city of Tyre was at this time "in the condition in which it had been left by the successors of Alexander the Great—the island which once held the city being joined to the main-land by a causeway, with a harbor on the north and another on the south."† As the ship had to discharge her cargo at this place, there was a delay of seven days; and Paul, ever on the alert for opportunities of usefulness, employed this interval in seeking out‡ the Christian disciples of the city and laboring for their good. The prophets among them repeated the warnings which he had elsewhere received of the dangers which were before him, and sought to dissuade him from his purpose of going up to Jerusalem. But he was inexorable; and therefore, with tearful affection, they accompanied him to the shore, where they knelt with him in prayer, while, as before at Miletus, with the elders of Ephesus, he commended them "to God and to the word of his grace."

From Tyre the vessel went to Ptolemais, which is to-day one of the most ancient seaports in the world. It is the

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* Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii., p. 229. † Ibid., vol. ii., p. 235.

‡ The term rendered "finding," in Acts xxi., 4, literally means "finding after diligent search."

Accho of the Book of Judges;* the Ptolemais of classical antiquity; the St. Jean D'Acre of the Crusaders; and the Acre which, garrisoned in 1799 by Sir Sydney Smith, successfully resisted the assault of Napoleon; but in its long history, we do not find anything more interesting to the Christian than Paul's landing here just before that final visit to Jerusalem, which ultimately opened the way for his going to Rome, although not quite in the manner that he had at one time expected. After one brief day spent with the brethren in that even then venerable city, the apostle went with his friends overland to Cæsarea, a distance of some thirty miles. Here, having still some time to spare before the feast of the Pentecost, he remained for a few days, that he might renew his fellowship with the Christians of the city, and probably, also, that he might send forward tidings of his arrival to the brethren of Jerusalem. He found a home, for the time, in the house of Philip, one of the seven who had been chosen to the deacon's office, but now better known as the Evangelist. This man had been instrumental in producing that great spiritual uprising in Samaria, of which we read in one of the early chapters of The Acts, and he had been commissioned by the Holy Ghost to instruct the Ethiopian treasurer; but, as seems to me probable from a reference made in the record to which I have just alluded, his permanent abode was at Cæsarea.† At this time his four unmarried daughters,‡ who were possessed of the gift of prophecy, were living under his roof; and though it is not said in so many words that they foretold what was to happen to the apostle, yet it seems likely that they also renewed the warnings which he had already so frequently re-

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* Judg. i., 31. † Acts viii., 40.

‡ There seems no foundation whatever for the notion of Plumptre that they were under a vow.

ceived. But whether they did so or not, we know that Paul had once more to face the tears and entreaties of his friends; for during his sojourn at Cæsarea, Agabas, the Jerusalem prophet, who had formerly predicted the approach of famine,* came down from the metropolis, and in a very striking and impressive manner foreshadowed to the apostle the perils which were before him. Using a symbol, after the frequent practice of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, he took Paul's girdle, and bound with it his own hands and feet, saying, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." This was a much more specific and alarming announcement than any which had yet been made, indicating as it did that he should be handed over to the Roman power; and therefore, now for the first time apparently, Luke and Trophimus and Aristarchus, and the rest of his fellow-travellers, added their entreaties to those which had come from the Christians in other places, as they came now from the brethren in Cæsarea, with the view of inducing him to reconsider and if possible recall his resolution. But he was still firm, and said, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Now, it may seem that in all this Paul was going in direct antagonism to the will of God; and in particular, that support is given to that opinion by the record concerning the disciples at Tyre, "who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem."† But that and the other warnings which he had received—this of Agabas no less than the rest—could not have been understood by the apostle as distinct and positive prohibitions of his visit to Jerusalem; for, had he taken them in that sense, he cer-

* Acts xi., 28. † Acts xxi., 4.

tainly would never have gone to the Holy City on this occasion. It was sufficient for him at any time to have a clear indication of the will of God, for that always insured his following it. The state of the case, however, was this. His friends, through the revelation of the Spirit, had learned that dangers were before their beloved teacher; and, naturally enough, their affection for him impelled them to do all they could to keep him from going where the danger was. The Spirit did not say one thing in him and another in them. In him there was the conviction clear and strong —indeed, unalterable—that it was his duty to go. So much the Spirit had made plain to him. In them there was the belief, produced by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, that he would be imprisoned and given over to the Roman power if he went; and the sum of the two communications was an intimation to the apostle that he was not to go unless he was prepared for hardship, imprisonment, and possibly also martyrdom. But he was prepared for any or all of these things; and so, when his weeping friends heard his unfaltering words of determination, they recognized the purpose of God in the matter, and said, "The will of the Lord be done."

At Cæsarea, Paul made the acquaintance of one Mnason, who had been a disciple from the early days of the Church, and whose residence was at Jerusalem. It was forthwith arranged, therefore, for the purpose of securing his comfort, and perhaps also his safety, that Paul should lodge at his house; and thus it came that he accompanied the pilgrim band in their journey between the two Jewish capitals. But the journey was performed in no such aristocratic manner as the average English reader is apt to suppose; for the words in our translation, "After those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem,"* are the antique

* Acts xxi., 15.

rendering of terms which would now be anglicized after this fashion: "We took up our baggage,* and went up to Jerusalem."

Paul was gladly received by the brethren whom he met; and on the day after his arrival, he had an opportunity of describing in detail to James and all the elders the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. They listened with deep interest to his statement, and glorified God on his behalf. But, as we have repeatedly seen already in this history, there were two parties in the Jewish Church. The one was liberal in its principles, and desired to lay no unnecessary burden on the Gentile converts. The other was narrow in its character, and inclined to put the greatest possible stress on obedience to the Mosaic law. The members of this latter section, indeed, received Jesus as the Messiah, but they were as much Jews as ever in their ceremonial observances, and were likely to be greatly scandalized by any neglect of their national ritual. Now, they had heard exaggerated reports of Paul's doings among the Gentiles. It had been said that he taught all the Jews which were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs; but very evidently that was an overstatement, for Paul had been as a Jew to the Jews. He had himself conformed to their law. He had circumcised Timothy, and in connection with his vow at Cenchrea, he had shaved his head; and so far from having taught that believing Jews should cease to observe Jewish customs, he had laid it down as a principle that every man, circumcised or uncircumcised, should abide in his calling, and accept his position with its attendant responsibilities.† The terms of

* One of the old English versions has it, "We trussed up our fardels."

† 1 Cor. vii., 18–20.

the report, therefore, which were spread abroad regarding him were false; and yet we can easily understand how such things had been laid to his charge; for he had always unequivocally declared that circumcision was of no merit as a ground of acceptance with God, and that Jews and Gentiles stood precisely on the same level as far as that was concerned. He allowed the Jews to do as they pleased about their observance of the customs; but he would not consent to have these things imposed as essential to salvation upon the Gentiles. He taught that, in themselves considered, they were of no importance; and that not through circumcision or through uncircumcision were men to be saved, but only through "faith which worketh by love." Now, the ultimate tendency of such doctrines was undeniably to do away with all Jewish observances among believers in Christ; for if they had no essential value, they would continue to be practised only through old habit, or for the sake of avoiding the giving of offence to weak consciences; and so soon as the habit lost its power, or the consciences of believers generally became stronger, all Jewish customs would disappear out of the Church. As a matter of fact, this was precisely what did happen; and perhaps the fanatical Jews, seeing the inevitable result of Paul's doctrines, went so far as to charge him with having actually recommended that which certainly was the logical outcome of his teachings; but in that transition time the apostle was very careful of his words. He had never said such things as had been reported of him. James and the elders did not believe that he had. They knew precisely where he stood; and so, to allay suspicion and ward off danger, they made a proposal to him, which he at once accepted. On his former visit Paul had been himself under a vow, and his observance of the rites prescribed by Moses for the formal termination of the season over which such a pledge extended

had been greatly appreciated by the members of the Jewish church. Accordingly, it was suggested to him by James and the elders that something of the same kind might be done by him now. He could not precisely repeat the former process, for the shortest period for the Nazarite vow was thirty days, and as, in his own intention, his visit to Jerusalem at this time was to be brief, he never thought of taking any such obligation upon himself. But there was a middle course, by the taking of which every good object sought by James would be secured. He might attach himself to a company of Nazarites, join with them in the services connected with their purification, shave his head along with them, and bear all the expenses connected with their sacrificial offerings. This was always regarded as a pious and generous act; and Josephus mentions it to the credit of the elder Agrippa, that when he returned to Jerusalem a crowned monarch, after many narrow escapes of his life, he showed his gratitude by taking upon himself the charges of a great number of Nazarites.* Now it happened that there were in Jerusalem at this time four Jewish believers who had such a vow upon them; and the officials of the church suggested that Paul should join with them in the final services of their purification, which required only seven days, and should bear their charges.

They did not insist on this as a thing essential to his being recognized as a Christian brother, but simply as a matter of expediency, and for the sake of harmony. They had no wish to resile from the articles of agreement which had been determined on, many years before, in connection with the reference from Antioch, and they are careful to reaffirm their adherence to them in their conference with Paul. But at such a festival time many thousands of Jewish disciples

* Josephus, "Wars," ii., 15, 1.

would be in the city; they would be sure to hear that he was there, and owing to the reports which had been circulated about him, there would be a crowd continually observing him. It would, therefore, be greatly for the interests of peace, and not at all disloyal to principle, if he would in some such way as they had indicated let it be seen that, so far as his personal habits were concerned, he did not despise the law.

Now, we cannot wonder that Paul consented to this proposal. He had already circumcised Timothy in precisely similar circumstances; and the arguments which he had so recently enforced in his First Epistle to the Corinthians and his Epistle to the Romans, fairly applied to the case which James and the elders put before him, pointed to his conformity to their requests as the true line of duty. Without any hesitation, therefore, he did as they suggested; and the week of ceremonial service was almost ended, when an incident occurred which changed the whole aspect of affairs, and resulted in his imprisonment in the Castle of Antonia.

To understand the case thoroughly, we must bear in mind that the political condition of the Jews at this time was exceedingly unsettled. Felix was the Roman procurator, and his cruel and determined conduct had driven the Jews to the verge of insurrection. In the year before the apostle's arrival, the high-priest who had firmly expostulated with Felix on the nation's behalf was slain, with the governor's connivance as was supposed, in the Temple. About the same time, also, an Egyptian adventurer claiming to be the Messiah, and promising to restore the kingdom to Judah, had gone out into the wilderness with four thousand sicarii, around whom a force had collected of some thirty thousand men, with whom he threatened to attack the troops by whom Jerusalem was garrisoned. This impostor was

defeated, and his followers dispersed; but as he had himself escaped, there was a natural anticipation that he might speedily reappear, and so even a closer watch than usual was kept by the Romans over the movements of the Jews. A knowledge of these facts enables us at once to understand the vigilance and energy displayed by the Roman officer on the very outbreak of the riot which is here described.

The apostle had gone into the Temple for some ritual purpose, when some Jews, perhaps from Ephesus, certainly from the province of Asia, recognized him, and immediately raised an uproar against him, crying, "Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place." If Paul had done what they laid to his charge, he was guilty of a disrespect for the worship of Jehovah in the Jewish Temple, which he had not shown for that of Diana in the Temple of Ephesus. But he could not have done anything of the kind; and even if he had attempted it, the prudence of his companions would have kept them from going with him; for beyond the middle wall which divided the court of the strangers from that of the Jews, no man of another nation was permitted to pass, and every means was taken to warn visitors of the danger which they incurred in disregarding that prohibition. The recent excavations of the Palestine Exploration Society have brought to light a slab with an inscription, discovered and deciphered by M. Clermont Ganneau, which illustrates the horror with which the Jews looked on such a profanation. Its contents show that it must have formed a part of the low wall just mentioned. "*No man of alien race is to enter within the balustrade and fence that goes round the Temple. If any one is taken in the act, let him know that he has himself to blame*

for the penalty of death that follows."* It is hardly likely, therefore, that with such an inscription before their eyes, either Paul or his companions would have been so foolhardy as to attempt that with which they were charged; but the terms of the exclamation indicate sufficiently the purpose of those who made the accusation. They wished to have Paul summarily put to death, for a crime in regard to which the Romans would not be likely to interfere. But he had not been guilty of that of which he was accused. The whole thing was founded on a mistake. The Asiatic Jews had seen Trophimus and Paul together on the street, and they supposed that he had taken him with him into the forbidden precinct. But no time was given him for explanation or vindication. The cry of the men of Asia had gathered a crowd. That crowd heard Paul accused — by those who seemed to know whereof they affirmed—of bringing Gentiles into the Holy Place, and teaching the people everywhere against the law, and so they immediately attacked him, with the view of putting him to death. One wonders whether, in this exciting moment, the apostle remarked the similarity of the charges brought against him to those which had been advanced against Stephen. We cannot tell. We only know that his sublime words, "None of these things move me," were now nobly verified; for he did not betake himself to flight, but calmly awaited the issue, whatever that might be. The fact that he was in the Holy Place secured a few moments' delay, for the scrupulous Jews would not defile its pavement with his blood; and they had to take time to drag him out of the inner court and shut its gates against him. That punctiliousness of theirs saved his life; for by the time that they had brought him into the outer place, and were just beginning to lay violent hands upon

* "New Testament Commentary for English Readers," vol. ii., p. 149.

him, the castle guard was on the spot, and took him under its protection.

The Tower of Antonia, which was garrisoned by imperial troops, was situated at the north-west corner of the Temple area; and as it was carried up to such a height as to overtop the spacious courts of the sacred enclosure, the sentinel, who at all the great feasts was stationed on its summit, could see when any disorder occurred, and give an immediate alarm. On the present occasion, for the reasons already indicated, he was remarkably active; and before any serious injury was inflicted on the apostle, the troops were already on the scene under the command of Claudius Lysias. This officer, seeing that Paul was somehow the occasion of the outbreak, commanded that he should be bound with two chains, and after he had been thus secured, he asked who he was, and what he had done. But in the confusion created by the mob, he could get no satisfactory answers to his questions, and therefore he ordered him to be taken into the tower. As the soldiers were obeying this command, the crowd became so infuriated that they had actually to carry their prisoner in their arms; and as they bore him away the mob hooted, at him and followed him with execrations. But amid all this tumult Paul was self-possessed; and when he reached the castle stairs, he asked permission to speak to the commandant. In making his request, he used the Greek language, which so surprised Lysias that he said, "Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men?" But on hearing from the apostle that he was a Jew from Tarsus, and that he wished to speak to the people, he cheerfully granted that liberty to address the multitude which had been so courteously requested.

Here, however, we must for the present conclude, leaving

the speech which Paul delivered on this occasion for future consideration, while we seek to glean for ourselves some profitable lessons from the field over which we have been passing.

And in the first place, we may find a stimulus to our flagging zeal in the contemplation of the apostle's activity in seeking for and improving opportunities of usefulness. Throughout this journey he had one principal end in view, namely, the reaching of Jerusalem before the Day of Pentecost. Neither the entreaties nor the tears of friends could divert him from that purpose. But mark, also, how, while moving steadily forward, and losing no means of conveyance that offered, he yet filled in every interval of travel with labors for the welfare of his fellow-men and the glory of his master. At Troas he finished a week's evangelistic work, by preaching till long past midnight on the evening of the Lord's-day. At Miletus, when there was not time for him to go to Ephesus, he sent for the elders of the church there to come to him, and held with them that service which stands out as the most touching and memorable in his recorded history. At Tyre he made diligent search for disciples, among whom he labored for seven days with such results that when he left they hung around him with tears and benedictions. At Acre he gave the one day of his sojourn to the salutation of the brethren. Men speak with enthusiasm of the devotion to literary pursuits of such a one as Julius Cæsar, because on his rapid military journeys he contrived to write by the way his well-known commentaries; they eulogize the ardor of Cicero, who, amid the multiplicity of his judicial and political engagements, arranged to find time for the composition of some of the most philosophical treatises in the Latin language; and the younger Pliny tells with glowing admiration of the marvellous industry of his uncle, who dedicated every fragment of his time to those studies

of which his books were the ripened results; but have we not here in Paul a devotion to work which was not a whit less remarkable? Well might he have excused himself, if, after the exciting scenes through which he had just passed, he had spent the pauses of his journeyings at this time in taking rest! But he filled every available interval with the service of his generation. Is he, then, the less worthy of admiration because in him the love of souls took the place of that love of literature which was the mainspring of the activity of those others to whom I have alluded? Nay, verily, but only the more; for the ambition which was behind his toil was not that which seeks personal honor or distinction, but that which desires the welfare, both temporal and eternal, of the human race; and the works which he produced were not mere books—though even in that respect, if we have regard to quality as well as quantity, he is not behind the chiefest authors of antiquity—but institutions which have conserved and propagated even until this day, all the principles that lead to civil and religious freedom, as well as to personal holiness and universal brotherhood among men. Nor ought we to be content with giving him our admiration. He deserves our imitation; and we may be well assured that we shall reap success like that which he enjoyed only when we manifest such self-forgetting industry as he displayed. Look back over this journey, and you will cease to marvel that in one brief life he accomplished so much for Christ and for the world. Take that inflexible firmness which held him to what he believed to be right; add to that his quickness to perceive an opportunity of usefulness and his readiness to improve it to the utmost; then let these be vitalized and sustained by an intense love of Christ as a living, though unseen, Saviour and friend, and it becomes easy to account for his untiring perseverance and unparalleled success. Give us more of these principles, so unified and sustained

among the pastors and Christians of to-day, and we shall begin to understand what Paul meant when he said, "To me to live is Christ," while the wonderful results which followed his ministrations will be renewed among ourselves.

In the second place, we have unfolded to us in this history the true source of moral courage. When Luke and his companions, together with the disciples at Cæsarea, implored Paul not to go to Jerusalem, he said, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die also at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" and that these were not idle words, is made evident from the calm self-possession which he maintained when he was assaulted in the Temple and carried by the soldiers to the stairs of the castle. Now, it would be easy to eulogize this noble resolution, and we might pile epithet upon epithet in attempting to characterize it; but it will do us more good to inquire what the root was from which this courage grew. Was it a merely physical thing? There is such a courage as is only, or at least mainly, muscular; and in speaking of it thus I do not wish to disparage it in the very least. It is a very desirable thing. In its own place, it is a very good thing; yet, after all, it is mainly involuntary and instinctive. It costs no effort. He who possesses it is brave in the presence of danger, because he is not sensible that there is anything of which to be afraid. This is a sort of indifference; but it is quite otherwise with him who is of a sensitive, high-strung, delicately-nervous temperament. His tendency, rather, is to fear physical danger; and there is need of an effort of will, and besides that—as sustaining his will—there is need of enthusiasm for some sublime cause to rouse such a one to brave some deadly peril. The soldier who feels fear on the battle-field, but who holds himself at his post by a supreme devotion to duty or an ardent love of country, is a more courageous man by far than he who, with

an instinct like that of the war-horse, "mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted." In the one there is little more than a physical quality; in the other there is a moral strength triumphing over a bodily shrinking. Now, the latter, as it seems to me, was the case of Paul. Unless I have misread his history, or misunderstood his temperament, he was not naturally endowed with physical courage, but rather weak, nervous, and shrinking. He had, as I think, all the fear of pain which is felt by persons of the most sensitive organization; and therefore I judge that it was not so easy for him to confront danger as it would be for those who are differently constituted. But he had two principles within him which lifted him above all considerations of fear, and made him ready to brave any danger.

The first was love to Jesus Christ. We know what great things love for a fellow-mortal will defy. The mother will rush through the most appalling danger to save her child; the wife will become heroic in seeking to shield her husband from peril; and in the same way the love of Christ, when it fills the heart, will fire the man with an enthusiasm which will sustain him—because itself is sustained by the Holy Ghost—through the fiercest opposition and the deadliest peril. Now it was this love that inspired Paul. He was ready to suffer anything "for the name of the Lord Jesus;" and no matter how naturally shrinking and timid we may be, that love will give us fortitude. With his back to the Cross, the Christian may stand unflinchingly before every adversary.

The second principle that upheld Paul was confidence in God. Like Moses, "he endured, as seeing him that is invisible." Like Elisha, he saw with his faith-eye the hosts of the Lord encamping round him. He knew that he was doing God's work, and he had the most implicit trust that God would uphold him till his work was done. If it were

the Father's will that he should perish at Jerusalem, then he would only be the sooner with the Christ he loved so well; and so that alternative had no dread for him. If it were the will of God, on the other hand, that he should testify to the Lord Jesus, in prisons and in judgment-halls, before the tribunals of procurators and emperors, then God would give him grace to act well his part, and so that alternative had no terror in it. Thus he possessed his soul in peace, in spite of his natural susceptibility, because he had strong faith; and we may learn from his example how to meet the lesser trials of our lives, and the hour of death itself. With the love of Christ dwelling within us, and faith in God firmly cherished by us, courage and calmness will come, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, almost naturally and of course; and when both are strong, we may ascend with ease the several steps in that climax of assurance with which the apostle concludes one of his grandest arguments: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Finally, we may learn here how man proposes, but God disposes. We cannot but admire the spirit manifested by both parties in the conference between Paul and James. It was an example of faithful adherence to conscientious conviction in reference to essential matters, combined with forbearance and mutual concession in regard to things of minor importance. It would seem, too, that the course suggested by James and followed by Paul was admirably adapted to conciliate all parties in the Mother-Church. But see how it was all frustrated through this riot in the Temple. Truly, as the French diplomatist has put it in his famous epigram, "it is the unexpected that happens." In spite of

all their efforts at conciliation — nay, in consequence, one might almost say of the very making of these efforts—something occurred which had never entered into their calculations, and which to a large extent defeated the end they had in view. No doubt division in the Church might be obviated, but there was no enthusiasm created for Paul; for I must confess that I see little indication of interest in his after-fate on the part of the brethren in Jerusalem. But what I wish to make prominent is the fact that Paul's safety was imperilled through his following of that course of conduct which had been suggested to him at once for his security and for the good of the Church. What, then? Was it wrong for Paul to yield to James? Nay; for he was in that only following out his own principles of Christian brotherhood. But more was to come out of his imprisonment for the great cause of the Gentiles than could have been accomplished by his freedom, and so he was, under God, permitted to be apprehended, that through his apprehension the liberty of the Christian might be put upon a surer basis, and a way might be opened for his visit to Rome. Here, then, is the lesson. Let us take it with us and live on it in our common affairs, for we shall probably not get through to-morrow without having occasion to make some application of it. The most carefully framed plans may be unexpectedly upset by the occurrence of something which we had not foreseen, and could not have foreseen; but, when they are thus frustrated, we may be sure that God has a higher purpose than our own, and is working through our disappointment toward an end that shall be alike satisfactory to ourselves and honoring to him.

XXI.

FROM JERUSALEM TO CÆSAREA.

Acts xxii., xxiii.

HAVING received permission from the chief captain to address the multitude, Paul turned upon the castle stairs, and beckoning with his hand, as well as the chain that hung from it would permit, he commenced to speak to them in their vernacular tongue. When they heard that, they became instantly silent, and listened intently to his discourse, while he gave a brief summary of his personal history and experience. He began with a reference to his birth at Tarsus, and his education at Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel; and then, after an allusion to his zeal for the law of their fathers, as shown by his persecution of the disciples of Jesus, he went on to tell the wonderful story of his conversion; and was proceeding to explain how by the Lord himself he was commanded to leave Jerusalem and go to the Gentiles, when he was interrupted by an outburst of rage and execration like that which preceded the martyrdom of Stephen.

We have altogether three separate narratives of these events in this Book of The Acts of the Apostles. The first is given by the historian himself, in the ninth chapter; the second is that which is contained in the address now before us; and the third is that embodied in the apostle's defence before Agrippa. Now it is interesting to mark how, while agreeing in all material respects, these statements are varied

in certain details; and an explanation of the differences is furnished by the consideration of the object which in each address the apostle had in view. The record in the ninth chapter is but an outline of the main facts of the case; and on the two occasions on which he was put upon his defence, Paul, drawing upon his own recollection, gave prominence to such points as in his judgment seemed to him to be most likely to meet the emergency of the moment. Thus, in the present instance, his design very obviously was to conciliate the Jews by showing them that, so far from being estranged from them after his conversion, his great desire had been to remain in Jerusalem and labor there, and that it was only after he had been peremptorily commanded by the Lord in a vision to leave the city and go to the Gentiles, that he was reconciled to his departure. So he sets in the forefront of his address his education under Gamaliel and his zeal as a persecutor, appealing in proof of both to the high-priest and the elders. With the same object in view, we find him referring to Ananias here not as a brother disciple, but as "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt at Damascus;" for, though it was true that he was both, it was more important at this time to bring out the latter, in order that his hearers might see that, having been baptized by such a man, he was not likely to be inflamed with bigoted animosity against the Jews. In a similar way we account for the fact that, while in his speech before Agrippa he affirms that the Lord himself, at the time of his conversion, gave him a commission to the Gentiles, and in Luke's narrative it is alleged that a similar announcement was made to Ananias when he was sent to baptize the new convert, there is no mention made of either of these here. They were both true, but the apostle wished his hearers to understand, what was also true, that notwithstanding both of these intimations of the divine will regard-

ing him, he still clung to the desire to abide in Jerusalem, and if possible undo there the mischief which he had done by taking part in the shedding of the blood of Stephen, and that nothing but the positive command of the Lord could have induced him to go to the Gentiles.

But, however persuasively constructed Paul's discourse was, it failed to conciliate the crowd. That it held the multitude so long as it did, was no small proof of its excellence; but at the very mention of the Gentiles, the people became frantic; and, with the noise and gesticulations for which excited Orientals are proverbial, they cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live!" For the present, however, he was not in their power. He was now the prisoner of Claudius Lysias, the chief captain, who, though he did not know what to make of the riot, was not minded to give him up to popular fury. Ignorant as he was of the Aramaic dialect, he had not understood what Paul had said; but, as he could not help observing that some of the apostle's words had caused this new excitement, he commanded the centurion to examine him by scourging. This required that the accused person should be fastened to a stake, and that he should be lashed with a whip in the intervals between the questions which were put to him. It was supposed that thus he would be induced to make a truthful confession; but surely no expectation could be vainer in ordinary cases than that; for as one has remarked, "A person in pain cannot be supposed to be master of his own thoughts, and may be induced to make any declaration which shall procure immediate relief from his sufferings."* Paul, however, allowed himself to be stripped and bound, and then, when he had permitted the captain, centurion, and soldiers to commit themselves so far, he

* "Lectures on The Acts of the Apostles," by John Dick, D.D., p. 388.

quietly asked the officer, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" The effect was immediate. The centurion never thought of doubting what the apostle said, for it was a capital crime for one who was not entitled to it to claim the right of citizenship, and so he hastened to Claudius and said to him, "Take heed what thou doest, for this man is a Roman." The moment he heard that, the chief captain went to the apostle, and asked, "Art *thou* a Roman?" and receiving an affirmative reply, he said, as if amazed to find one whose bodily presence was so mean invested with such a dignity, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." Paul answered, with perhaps a pardonable pride in his tone, "But I was free born." It thus appears that his citizenship was not the consequence of his having been born at Tarsus, but came to him by right of inheritance from his father; for the chief captain had been already informed that he was a native of Tarsus,* and if that had been enough to make him a Roman, he would not have given orders that he should be scourged. But now he felt that he had already gone too far, and was grateful that the revelation had been made before he had committed any greater indignity. At once all idea of putting him to the torture was abandoned, and one may see, I think, from this point on, that Lysias took particular care that no harm should come to Paul, as if he were trying to wipe out the remembrance of the outrage which he had all but perpetrated.

The next day, desiring to understand clearly the nature of the disturbance which had taken place, and the substance of the charges which were preferred against Paul, Claudius loosed him from his bonds, and sent him to appear before the Jewish council of seventy whom he had specially sum-

* Acts xxi., 39.

moned for the occasion. The usual meeting-place of this body was the hall Gazith, which was separated from the stairs of the castle by but a narrow space; but, as it was within the sacred precinct, no Gentile could enter it; and therefore we are of opinion that in this instance the Sanhedrim met in another apartment. But, however that may have been, Paul could not confront that assembly without peculiar emotions. A little more than twenty years before, he had been himself, as some believe, a member of that august tribunal; and, in any case, he had been familiar with the appearance and characteristics of most of those who then belonged to it. Perhaps there were still some of his classmates at the school of Gamaliel among them, possibly, even some of his companions in the persecution of the first disciples. This may account for the peculiar phrase with which his first expression before them is here prefaced: "Paul earnestly beholding the council." He eagerly scanned the company before him, to discover what its composition was, and whether any of his former associates were there. Or perhaps there may be here an allusion to that infirmity of vision with which some suppose he was afflicted, and the words may describe that sort of intent and forward inspection with which one who is near-sighted seeks to make himself acquainted with the distant objects and persons in a large apartment.

He spoke as a Jew to Jews, as an equal to equals—"Men and brethren"—and boldly asserted his consciousness of rectitude in all his conduct. "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." This was deemed an insult by Ananias, the high-priest, who commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth, whereupon, with impassioned indignation, the apostle exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to

the law?" Different opinions have been entertained about this expression. Some consider that it was uttered in prophetic fervor, and remind us that the prediction was terribly fulfilled, when this haughty prelate, after having been removed from the high-priesthood, was murdered by the sicarii in the Jewish war.* Others, with whom we are disposed to agree, regard the words as an outburst of temper in a moment of extreme provocation. Paul was a man of like passions with ourselves. He had, as I have already said, a peculiarly sensitive organization; and we cannot wonder if, under the wanton insult which had been offered to him, he lost his self-control. It is not given to many to preserve in all circumstances the unbroken meekness of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and who was dumb as a sheep before the shearers. Even the greatest of the apostles fell short of the perfection of the Master, and is to be followed only so far as he followed Christ, so that, as Alford has remarked, this answer of Paul "may go far to *excuse* a like fervid reply in a Christian, or minister of the Gospel, but must never be used to *justify* it: it may serve for an apology, but never for an example."†

But the apostle was not long in recovering himself, for when the by-standers said, "Revilest thou God's high-priest?" he replied, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Of this answer, also, different explanations have been given. Those who believe that the apostle spoke of Ananias as a whited wall not in hastiness of temper, but in righteous indignation, would interpret this rejoinder somehow thus: "I did not know, and do not know now, that he is God's high-priest. I know that the office of high-priest

* Josephus, "Wars," ii., 17, 2–9.

† Alford's "Greek Testament," *in loco.*

among you exists only in name, and that very soon that too will be done away, so as to leave no vestige of that ancient dignity, which I could not have reviled without a flagrant violation of the law, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'" This interpretation, though very ably advocated by the late Dr. Addison Alexander, of Princeton, is, in my judgment, a little far-fetched and unsatisfactory; nor would it have been resorted to but for the fact that its author felt himself compelled to take a view of the Saviour's promise to his followers, which seems to me to make it amount to a guarantee for their personal infallibility whenever they should be placed before an earthly tribunal. I am disposed, therefore, to take the words in their natural meaning, as an expression of the fact that the apostle did not really know that the person who had given the command to smite him was the high-priest. And if I am asked for an explanation of this ignorance of Paul, I find it in one or other of three suppositions: either the high-priest did not wear the official robes by which usually he was distinguished, an omission which, if the meeting was not held in the accustomed place within the Temple, may be easily accounted for; or he was not at this time the president of the council, and so did not occupy the place in which the apostle would naturally have looked for him; or more simply still, the near-sightedness of the apostle prevented him from recognizing the official dignity of the man who spoke so roughly. Thus regarded, the words of Paul are an explanation of his former expression, and a frank, courteous, and gentlemanly apology for the impropriety of his hasty speech.

But whatever view may be taken of this reply, the interruption with which it was connected made it abundantly plain to the apostle that he need not look for impartial treatment at the hands of the council; and, therefore, he resolved to take such measures as might divert the energy of

his adversaries into another direction. Remembering well the bitterness of the old debates between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and having now, as a Christian, stronger convictions than ever as to the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, he cried out, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." The Sadducees were the broad school of the Jewish Church, and rejected the doctrine of the existence of angels or spirit, while they treated the idea of the resurrection of the dead with ridicule and scorn. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were orthodox Jews, and contended earnestly for the things which the Sadducees denied. Now, the resurrection of the dead had been assured to Paul by the rising of Christ from the grave; and the resurrection of Christ was the cardinal fact in the Gospel history. In referring to it here, therefore, we may suppose that his main purpose was to meet the Pharisees on that which was common ground both to him and them. As in Lycaonia, he took his hearers first on the lower level of natural religion, in order the better thereby to lead them to Christ; and as in Athens he began his address to the philosophers with the quotation of an inscription from one of their own altars, so now he proclaims his agreement with the Pharisees in the more important parts of their creed, with the view, if the opportunity offered, of leading them up to that Saviour whose resurrection had forever settled the question which was in dispute between them and the Sadducees. Thus he lifts the council above all paltry questions about himself, and fixes the attention of its members upon the most momentous subjects that can occupy the minds of men.

Perhaps, also, he had the conviction that, even if he could not thus gain the Pharisees for Christ, he would at least divide the ranks of his hearers, and so set them against each

other that they would forget their animosity to him. In either case the result would be advantageous, and therefore he flung among them this lighted brand, and waited to see whether it would kindle them into inquiry, or set them on fire with controversial zeal. The latter was the effect produced. On the one part, the Sadducees were bitter in their antagonism; on the other, the Pharisees were ardent in their support. Consistency constrained the latter to admit that he might be right. They said, "He told us yesterday of a vision which he had in the Temple, and for all you say to the contrary, O ye Sadducees, it is possible that a spirit or an angel did speak unto him. Now, if that were indeed the case, then in fighting against him ye are fighting against God." Curious, is it not, that they came so near the truth? Yet this frank admission of the possibilities of the case was owing more to their desire to silence their old adversaries, than to any intelligent conviction which they had of the correctness of Paul's doctrines. They did not care for him save only as a means of humbling them; and thus the meeting degenerated into a wrangle over him, in which he was in danger of being pulled in pieces between them. This, however, the chief captain could not permit. The life of a Roman citizen was in peril, and therefore he sent his soldiers to bring the apostle back into the castle.

And now that he was left alone, the heart of Paul might begin to sink within him. Was this, indeed, the result of his fondly-cherished purpose to visit Rome? Hardly had he set foot in Jerusalem before he was in bonds; and this to one of his active habits, and eager as he was to be useful to his fellow-men, would be a great affliction. He would feel himself to be held back from the great labor and joy of his life, and would be in danger of falling into despondency. But God came timely to his aid. In the night he had a vision, in which the Lord said to him, "Be of good cheer,

Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome;" and with that gracious assurance he was satisfied. He did not distress himself about the manner of his going: he was content with the pledge that he should go, and he left the rest to God, determined only to wait and watch for the development of the purpose of his Lord concerning him.

The following day a formidable conspiracy was organized for his destruction. Forty men bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had slain him, and they asked the chief priests and elders to lend themselves to their scheme. They proposed that the council should request the captain to send Paul down to them once more on the pretence that they wished to make some fuller inquiry into his case, and they promised that they would make away with him before he could reach the place of meeting. It was adroitly planned; and the men, whose predecessors in office did not scruple to give money for the betrayal of Jesus, would not hesitate about accepting this proposal for the murder of his disciple. But God had otherwise determined; and he is never at a loss for instruments to carry out his designs. By some means, not known to us, and yet not to be wondered at by us—for a secret cannot long be a secret that is known to forty men—the existence of the plot became known to Paul's nephew, who was then in Jerusalem, and who, with exemplary prudence, at once informed his uncle of the pit that had been dug for him. The apostle immediately procured for him an audience with the chief captain, who heard the story with all the courtesy of an educated Roman; and after cautioning his informant to tell no one that he had spoken with him, he took instant measures to frustrate the designs of the conspirators. He ordered a contingent of men, both cavalry and infantry, to be ready to proceed to Cæsarea

that night at nine o'clock; and when that hour arrived, he sent Paul with them on horseback, with a relay of horses, that there might be no delay by the way. He gave them also a letter to Felix, the governor, whose official residence was at Cæsarea. This letter, which I think Luke must have seen and copied, is given here in full, and is an interesting specimen of the official correspondence of the period. It gives a fair account of the circumstances of the case, except in one particular, in regard to which Claudius screens himself by a deviation from the truth. He makes it appear that his first interference on Paul's behalf was in consequence of his having discovered that he was a Roman citizen; whereas he did not find out that fact until the centurion, by his orders, was in the act of preparing to examine him by scourging. But, unhappily, this indifference to truth, when personal interests are involved, was far from uncommon among the Romans, even as it is not utterly unknown among ourselves.

Guarded by his military convoy, Paul went by night to Antipatris, a distance of about forty-two miles from Jerusalem. Here the foot-soldiers were sent back to the castle of Antonia, and the remainder of the journey—some twenty-six miles—was made by him with the cavalry escort alone. On the arrival of the party at Cæsarea, the officer in charge took Paul at once to Felix, and delivered the letter with which Claudius had intrusted him. When the governor had read that, he simply asked to what province the apostle belonged; and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he signified his intention of hearing his case, when, according to the arrangement made by Lysias, his accusers should appear. Then he ordered that he should be kept in Herod's palace, of which he was at the time himself an occupant. Here, however, it will be convenient for us to suspend this interesting history, that we may give point to some of the les-

sons which we may learn from the record over which we have come.

We are taught, then, in the first place, that prudence as well as courage is needful in the service of the Lord Jesus. We cannot read the address of our apostle from the castle stairs, or the account of his bearing in the presence of the council, without marvelling at the sagacity which he showed on both occasions. He was as far removed from rashness as from cowardice; and he had in him nothing of that foolish eagerness for martyrdom which is seen in many Christians of the early centuries. Everything which without compromising conscience or sacrificing principle he could do, either for the conciliation of others or for his own safety, was cheerfully done by him. Thus, in his defence before the people, he took pains so to arrange his words as to bespeak their attention; and it was not until, by the necessity of his position, he had to refer to his mission to the Gentiles, that he uttered that sentence by which they were enraged. In the same way, when the ignominy of scourging was about to be inflicted on him, he was not above standing on his undoubted right as a Roman citizen. And when he was before the council, he so put his case as to gain at least the sympathy of some of his hearers, and divide his antagonists into two contending parties. Now, in all this he has set us an example which we may profitably follow.

Just before the disruption of the Scottish Church, the great philosopher, Sir William Hamilton, who was then a professor in the University of Edinburgh, issued an appeal to the party which was led by Dr. Chalmers, bearing these words as its title, "Be not martyrs by mistake." Now, though his application of that advice to the case in point was open to question—was, in my judgment, inappropriate, and indeed inaccurate — yet the advice itself, taken as a general maxim, is full of wisdom. We are not to elevate a

minor scruple to the height of an essential doctrine of the faith, and make enemies for ourselves by the manner of our advocacy of something which is not worth disputing about. Neither are we to throw our lives away, when by the slightest exercise of prudence they may be preserved for further service in the Master's cause. This, indeed, so far as I can understand them, is the meaning of the preacher's words, "Be not righteous overmuch: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?"* and if we examine the records of church history, we shall find that many who shed their blood apparently for Christ have really been martyrs either to their own folly, which would not use perfectly allowable means for their deliverance, or to their own pride, which would not let them yield what without any disloyalty to the Great Master they might very well have conceded. When we take a stand, therefore, let us be sure that we are taking it from a regard to Christ, and not simply from self-conceit. And when we are called to suffer as Paul was here, let us be sure that we have done everything short of giving up principle, to prevent such an issue. If men are offended, let us take care that it is at the truth, and not at anything that is connected simply with ourselves. With all the prudence we can exercise, we may lay our account with frequent failures. We shall not always succeed in gaining our adversaries for Christ, or in securing our own safety; but then, when we have taken all precautions, we shall be perfectly clear that we are suffering for Christ, and so we shall have a claim upon his presence and assistance. How many young ministers have destroyed their happiness for the time, and perhaps also impaired their usefulness for life, by the lack of just such wisdom—or call it rather common-sense—as Paul was continually manifesting! They will not study men.

* Eccles. vii., 16.

They will not endeavor in any degree to become, even in things indifferent, "all things to all men." They are forever taking their position on some little thing of no consequence whatever, and saying regarding it, "By this I stand or fall;" and of course they fall, and they fall covered not with the glory of Christian martyrdom, but with the disgrace of ignorance and self-conceit. Whosoever you are, therefore, who are professing to work for Christ, see that it is for Christ you are working, and go to work wisely. Do not alienate from you, by your extreme views or your cutting criticisms, those who are in the Church. Look for that which is best in everybody, and address yourselves to that in recognition and love. Above all, consider well what shall be the probable results of your conduct in a given case. Remember that no one is perfect — not even yourselves; and seek as far as practicable, without sacrificing principle, to adapt yourselves to the imperfections of those with whom you have to work. Do not burn down the church simply that you may warm your hands at the blaze; for if you do, you will find that you are yourselves so scarred by the flames, that men will keep their distance from you for the rest of your lives. How often, alas, a man runs madly against a pillar expecting to be called a martyr to some great principle, and finds, in his sorrowful retrospect, that he has been a "martyr by mistake!"

We are taught, in the second place, by this history, that when we are in the greatest extremity God will come to us with his richest consolation. What a good Master Paul served! Who can read without emotion the account of the vision with which he was favored on the first night of his imprisonment, ere yet he had become accustomed to his chain, when he was in danger of sinking into despondency, and was beginning to fear lest his cherished visit to the great imperial metropolis would never be accomplished?

"Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Truly it is written, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." When we review the accounts of the doings and sufferings of the people of God in other days, we are sometimes apt to say within ourselves that, if we had been in their circumstances, we should surely have given way, and brought dishonor on the Christian name, and we begin to suspect that we are not Christians at all. But we forget. God fitted them by his special grace for their special work; and if ever again similar demands shall be made upon his servants, he will similarly endow them to meet them. So, again, when we peruse the records of the experiences of believers on their death-beds with which Christian biography abounds, we may be apt to think that we could not be like them in the hour and article of dying, and we begin to question the genuineness of our faith. But here, too, we forget; for what mean these words, "At evening time it shall be light;" and again, "My strength is made perfect in weakness"? It is good to be in Christ—indeed, indispensable to be in Christ—and so to be always ready for death; but that is a different thing from always feeling ready to die; and I have never recognized the question, "Are you ready to die?" as a true or proper test wherewith to try a man's spiritual condition. When a Christian is to die, God will give him the feeling of readiness to die. In the good old-fashioned phrase, "he will give dying grace for a dying hour," just as here he gave Paul peculiar help for a peculiar necessity. Courage, then, my brother! Do the work that is at thy hand for Christ's sake, and out of love to him. Leave everything else to him. Do not meet difficulties until they come; for when they come he will give thee strength to overcome them. Do not trouble thyself, either, about dying. God does not wish the pathway of thy

life to be forever darkened with the shadow of death. Go forward, and when thou comest to the river thou shalt find the ark of the covenant already in it, and thou shalt pass over dry-shod—ay, though it should be the time of harvest, when usually the floods are out!

Finally, we may learn from this chapter of Paul's history, that though God's promise is apparently unqualified, it does not absolve us from the prompt and energetic use of means. The Lord assured Paul that he should bear witness of him at Rome; yet when the apostle heard of the conspiracy of the Jews to take away his life, he did not fall back upon that promise with folded hands, and take no measures to insure his safety. On the contrary—and here again we see his admirable common-sense—he sent his nephew at once to the chief captain, and did all that was in his power to baffle the designs of the conspirators. Now, it is the same with all the promises which God has given. They are fulfilled through the co-operation of human agency with the divine, and both are needful to gain the end. That is not faith, therefore, but presumption, which ignores all means, and expects that the blessing will come. The offering of a prayer binds us to the use of means for the securing of its answer. The trusting of a promise will bring only disappointment to us unless, like Paul here, we take measures—such at least as are in our own power—to secure its fulfilment. God promises us the victory, but it is in connection with the command, "Fight the good fight of faith." God promises us a harvest; but it is after this fashion, "Be not weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." There is no reaping assured to isolated effort, or to fitful, spasmodic labor; but only to a sustained course of perseverance in well-doing. God promises the crown of life, but it is on this wise: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." So in regard to temporal

blessings. It is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich; and if we go down upon our knees and cry for bread, while yet we take no measures to obtain the labor by which we may earn it, we are insulting God, even when we are seeming most to trust him. Effort without prayer is impiety; prayer without effort is mockery. In the union of the two is the highest wisdom.

XXII.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX: FELIX BEFORE PAUL.

Acts xxiv.

BEFORE entering upon the details of Paul's trial at the bar of Felix, we must interpolate a brief summary of some leading events in Jewish history, together with a short description of the characters of those persons who now, for the first time, make their appearance in our narrative.

When Herod Agrippa, the King of the Jews, expired at Cæsarea, under the circumstances described in the twelfth chapter of The Acts, he left four children—one son, Agrippa the younger, who will soon come before us as the guest of Festus, and three daughters, Bernice, Mariamne, and Drusilla. The Roman Emperor, Claudius, had promised the youthful Agrippa that he should sit upon his father's throne; but under the influence of Agrippina, the empress, he kept the Jewish prince at Rome on the plea that he was too young to bear the burden of royalty, and sent Cuspius Fadus out to be the governor of Judæa, which thus relapsed into a Roman province. After two years, this man was superseded by Tiberius Alexander, a renegade Jew, who had turned heathen to advance his worldly interests. In two years more he too was displaced, and succeeded by Ventidius Cumanus, whose term of office was characterized by so many tumults and enormities that he was sent to Rome to give an account of his stewardship before the emperor, the result being that he was banished, and Antonius Felix was

appointed in his room. This man, originally a slave, was the brother of Pallas, one of the freedmen of the Emperor, and at this time his particular favorite. To the influence of Pallas, seconded by that of the Empress Agrippina, and supported also, in an evil hour for himself, by the Jewish high-priest Jonathan, Felix owed his elevation to the government of Judæa. His character has been thus described by the historian Tacitus: "In the practice of all kinds of cruelty and lust, he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave;" and again: "He did not think it needful to put any restraint on his desires, but considered his connection with the emperor's favorite as a license for the worst of crimes."* His period of office was full of troubles and seditions, but he had a ready and unscrupulous promptitude which succeeded in stamping out rebellion for the time by the use of the harshest measures. When Jonathan, the high-priest, expostulated with him for his conduct, it was generally believed that he hired assassins, who slew the prelate within the very precincts of the Temple; and to his administration we may apply, with even greater pertinence, the words which Milman has used with reference to that of Cumanus, and say that in it "the low and sullen murmurs which announced the approaching eruption of the dark volcano, now gathering in Palestine, became more distinct."† In private life he was equally reprehensible, for he allowed no considerations of justice or morality to stand between him and the gratification of his wishes. Becoming enamored of Drusilla, sister of Agrippa, and one of the greatest beauties of her time, he employed the Cyprian soothsayer, Simon—by some supposed to have been identical with Simon Magus—to persuade her to elope to him from her hus-

* Tacitus, "Ann.," xii., 54; "History," v., 9.

† "History of the Jews," vol. ii., p. 174.

band, Azizus, King of Emesa; and at the time to which our history belongs, these two were living at Cæsarea in adulterous alliance. Such was the judge at whose bar the apostle was now to stand. Let us see how the proceedings were conducted.

It was an understood regulation in the Roman courts, that a prisoner was to be brought up for trial as soon as possible after his apprehension; therefore, five days after Paul's removal from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, the Jews made their appearance in the palace hall to prosecute their case. They were headed by Ananias, the high-priest, and accompanied by a barrister named Tertullus. Judging from his name, this lawyer was probably a Roman; and we know that it was not uncommon at that date for young advocates to leave the metropolis for a time, and, in the wake of some newly-appointed governor, go out to one or other of the provinces, so that by practising in the courts abroad they might the better fit themselves for rising to eminence in the Forum at home. It fell upon Tertullus here, as counsel for the prosecution, to open the case. He began, as was customary, with a compliment to the judge; but in the very framing of that, he must have felt himself considerably embarrassed. Felix was neither a good governor nor a respectable man; moreover, he was heartily hated by the Jews. If, therefore, the orator had praised him overmuch, he would have offended his clients; but, on the other hand, if he had refrained from all eulogy, he might have displeased Felix, and thus lost his cause. Therefore, with a tact which is as creditable to his ingenuity as to his honesty, he fixed upon the only thing that was praiseworthy in the government of the procurator, and made honorable mention of the energy and success with which he had repressed freebooters and rebels in the land, and thereby preserved something like order among the people. This done, he went on to prefer his

accusation against Paul, speaking, of course, from the brief with which he had been furnished. Luke has given us only the heads of the indictment, but he has said enough to let us clearly understand the object which the adversaries of the apostle had in view. Tertullus accused him of three things: first, of being a mover of sedition among the Jews throughout the empire; second, of being a ringleader in the sect of the Nazarenes; and third, of having profaned the Temple of Jerusalem. The first of these charges was an offence against Roman law, and amounted to an accusation of treason against the emperor; but there was evidently no intention of pressing that. The other two were violations of the Jewish law; and there can be no doubt that the design of Tertullus, as instructed by the Jews, was to get the governor to send the case back to the council at Jerusalem, as being one that more properly belonged to its jurisdiction. If he had done that, then the Jews would have had Paul completely in their power, and would have made short work with his execution. I do not suppose that they told Tertullus all that was in their minds, or that he was in any sense a partner in their plot; but that he meant, if possible, to have Paul sent back to Jerusalem, is evident from the fact that he attempted to convey the impression that Lysias had, with great violence, removed the apostle from the council when he was actually standing before its tribunal. Tertullus put the case, no doubt, as it had been represented to him; but we know how untrue that representation was. We have seen how, so far from seeking to judge Paul according to their law, they would once and again have torn him in pieces without any show of trial, but for the interference of the chief captain. We have seen, too, that his appearance before the council at all was at the instance of the captain, that he might learn something more concerning him, and that consequently Paul had never been a criminal

before its bar. But they wanted to have him back, that they might destroy him ; and so they gave to Tertullus this version of the story, which he set forth in the court with all the added attractiveness of eloquence, and then, with a reference to the number and respectability of his witnesses, he resumed his seat.

When he had ceased, his clients signified their approval of all that he had advanced on their behalf, and then the governor asked what Paul had to say for himself. Very quietly the apostle commences his reply, and as he proceeds, we note the courtesy, the calmness, the dignity, and the cogency of his answer. He, too, has a word of respect for the judge ; for, though the character of the man was despicable, the dignity of the office was honorable, therefore he congratulates himself that he is arraigned before one whose long residence in the country had given him some acquaintance with the peculiarities of the people and of their religion. Then, beginning at his arrival in Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost, he took up and disposed of the accusations of Tertullus in regular order. He had been no mover of sedition, for, only twelve days before, he had gone up to the Holy City to take alms to the poor of his nation, and neither then nor on any former occasion, neither in the Temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the street, had he entered into dispute with any man, or in any way attempted to disturb the peace. It was, therefore, impossible for his adversaries to prove any of the assertions which, on that head, they had made. Then, as to his being one of the Nazarenes, it was certainly true that, after the way which they called a sect, he worshipped the God of his fathers ; but it was still the God of his fathers whom he worshipped. He believed, as thoroughly as his accusers professed to do, all the things which were written in the law and in the prophets ; and if it were allowable to have sects of

Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews, he did not see anything illegal in the existence of that of the Nazarenes, especially as the great hope which he cherished was one which he held in common with the Pharisees, this, namely, "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." Nor did he hold that hope in conjunction with an unrighteous life; for he steadfastly exercised himself "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Further, as touching their allegation about the profanation of the Temple, it was false from beginning to end. He had, indeed, gone into the Temple with offerings, and while he was there he had been assaulted by certain Jews from Asia; but he was there in the discharge of a sacred duty, and he had made no tumult, neither had he taken Gentiles with him into the forbidden court. Let them prove the contrary if they could. Where were those Jews from Asia who had first created prejudice against him? It was strange that they had not been called to give their testimony. Had they been spirited away because it had been discovered that they could not substantiate their assertions? But even failing them, let those present stand forth and declare whether they had found any evildoing in him save that to which he had already referred, namely, that he had said, "Touching the resurrection of the dead am I called in question this day."

Felix saw at once that the statement of Paul was more in harmony with the letter of the chief captain than was that of Tertullus; but in the mention of those alms which the apostle spoke of he scented gold, and, with an eye to a bribe, he remanded the prisoner, openly professing that he would inquire thoroughly into the case when Claudius Lysias should come down, but inwardly desiring to give an opportunity for the offer of money. With the same object in view, he did not send Paul to the common prison, but com-

mitted him to a centurion, that he might be kept in military custody—that is to say, chained by his right arm to a soldier's left—but having permission to enjoy the fullest fellowship with his friends.

Thus commenced that long captivity which lasted for at least two years after Paul's arrival at Rome, and yet the heart of the apostle was not unduly depressed. He had within him the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and his loneliness was brightened for him by the society of Christian brethren. Philip, the evangelist, lived at Cæsarea, and there also were many other disciples who would consider it an honor to be permitted to minister to him. Besides, as Luke and Aristarchus are found setting out with him on his voyage to Rome two years later, it is likely that they were with him all the while, and perhaps it was during this time that Luke wrote at Paul's suggestion, and after diligent inquiry of his own, that beautiful gospel which has so refreshed the Church of Christ in every age. If that were indeed the case, then what a blessed result has accrued to us from this seemingly untoward, and really unjust, confinement!

But the Christians in Cæsarea were not the only ones interested in the noble prisoner. Drusilla had heard his story, probably from Felix himself, and we may perhaps conclude that it was at her request that the governor "sent for Paul, and heard from him concerning the faith of Christ." An inferior man might have been tempted to avail himself of such an opportunity for pleading his own cause; and a timid man might have been frightened into a guilty silence regarding the sins of which his hearers had been guilty, particularly if he remembered the fate of Jonathan, the high-priest; but with Paul Christ was ever uppermost, and the desire to save souls the ruling passion; and therefore, without any cautious balancing of probabilities or any calcula-

tion of the effect which his words might have upon his own prospects, he preached fully, faithfully, and we must add also, appropriately. We do not know the precise course which he followed; but it seems natural to conclude that he began with a statement of the facts regarding Christ; that, remembering that Drusilla was a Jewess, he went on to show how in these the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled; and that, by way of application, he proceeded to show how men needed to be saved from their sins, and how Jesus wrought out in them the deliverance they required. Probably it was in this last connection that he reasoned of righteousness so necessary in all men, but especially in a judge; of continence or chastity, in regard to which his hearers had been such scandalous offenders; and of that judgment to come, which is before every man, and at which we must all give account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. But whatever was the method which he adopted, his word was with power, for "Felix trembled." As he was confronted alike with the past and with the future, and made to feel almost as if he were already at the bar of God, he shuddered like the Chaldean monarch when he saw "the dread handwriting on the wall." But his emotion did not lead him to repentance, and so he only said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." As for Drusilla, it does not appear that any very great impression was produced on her. Haply—for your guilty ones are always purists, at least by affectation—she might go away complaining that Paul was a vulgar and indelicate fellow; but whatever she thought then, one would like to know whether any lingering echo of the apostle's words was sounding in her secret ear, on that dreadful day so graphically described by the younger Pliny in one of his letters to the historian Tacitus, when she and her son per-

ished so suddenly in the eruption of Vesuvius, which buried Herculaneum and Pompeii beneath its ashes.

Often after this Felix sent for Paul with the secret hope of having the offer of a bribe made to him, but never again was he so moved about the concerns of his soul; and so, when, two years later, he was recalled to Rome, under accusation from the Jews at Cæsarea, he left Paul bound, thinking thereby to propitiate his enemies and prevent them from proceeding to extremities against him.

The central point of the history over which to-night we have come is the interview between Paul and Felix, at which, for the time, the parties seemed to have changed places, and the prisoner laid down the law before the judge, while the judge trembled before the prisoner. There is here much material for practical reflection. I select only a few particulars.

Notice, then, in the first place, the twofold power of conscience as here indicated. I enter not now into any metaphysical analysis of that which we call conscience. Let it suffice to say that it is that within us which gives us the distinction between right and wrong, along with the feeling of obligation to do the one and to refrain from doing the other. It lays down the law to the soul. It deals in the words "ought" and "ought not;" and by its decisions it lays claim to that which Bishop Butler calls "supremacy," while it answers to the description of it given by the same author as "that superior principle in every man which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart as well as his external actions; which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him the doer of them, accordingly;

and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always, of course, goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own."* Its phenomena are familiar to every man who communes much with his own heart, and they are to me inexplicable unless they are understood as pointing directly and immediately to Him who is the source of all law. They are not wrong, therefore, in my judgment, who speak of it as God's vicegerent in the soul, or as the God within the breast. This is the law written on the heart, of which Paul makes mention in one of his letters, and to which he refers when he says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves." No doubt the depravity of the heart has in many well-nigh effaced the writing, yet enough remains to witness for the right and to condemn the wrong. Now see what a force this inner principle possesses, as illustrated by the contrast which the history before us presents. On the one hand, when the apostle is accused, and is called to answer for himself, he is calm and courageous; on the other, when Felix hears Paul's irrefutable reasoning about judgment to come, he is alarmed, and trembles. Why this difference between the two? The answer is easy. Paul had exercised himself "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." He knew that the things laid to his charge by his accusers were untrue. He had done, in regard to them, no wrong; and as before God he had the assurance that his sins were forgiven for the sake of Christ, and had the witness in himself that he was following the guidance of him whose he was and whom he served, he had a good conscience, and that made him a hero.

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* "Sermons on Human Nature," by Rt. Rev. Joseph Butler, D.D. (Sermon II.).

But Felix was haunted by the remembrance of his unjust decisions, his robberies, his cruelties, and his impurities. He could not vindicate himself to himself. How then could he stand before the bar of God? He had an evil conscience, and that made him a coward. My hearer, what does your conscience say about you? Does it give you boldness at the thought of the day of judgment? or does it fill you with dismay at the idea of your being "naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom you have to do?" Do not forget that there is a judgment to come, the awards of which shall be unerring and eternal. As you would prepare for that ordeal, I entreat you now to anticipate it; and if your own heart condemns you, and is even now forecasting its doom, I implore you, while yet your day of grace lasts, to betake yourself to Jesus, that he may cleanse your conscience from guilt, and may purge it from dead works to serve the living God.

Notice, in the second place, the danger of stifling convictions. Felix did not allow his feeling of the guilt of sin to ripen into conversion, but overlaid it with the pleasures and the ambitions of his daily life. He sent no more for Paul to renew his reasonings before him; and as we learn from history, he was recalled to Rome, where he would have suffered the penalty due to his atrocities, had not his brother prevailed upon the emperor to spare his life. Thus he never again was stirred to the depths of his soul by the truth, and never, so far as we know, even desired to amend his life, but died as he had lived, the votary of appetite and the slave of sin. Not every one who trembles under the faithful presentation of God's truth is converted. Perhaps there are some here to-night who can recall the time when, by the solemn and earnest proclamation of the law, they were cut to the heart, and as they passed out of the house of prayer they said within themselves, "Yes, it is all true!

I must live another life;" but when the morrow came, they put the impression away from them, and they went their way to their business and their merchandise, determined to banish all spiritual subjects from their minds. It may be that this description of their case has moved them again, and that even as I speak they are sorely disturbed. Friends, will you be on your guard against repeating your former folly? Do not stifle your convictions! Do not choke down the cry which is even now seeking to find expression from your lips! Let it come out clear, sharp, and decisive, "Lord save me, I perish!" and let the feeling of this moment stiffen into a principle for life. Break away from every sin, and henceforth live not unto yourselves, but unto Him who died for you and rose again. They who attempt to overlay the reproaches of their consciences are only increasing their ultimate misery. They remind me of the janitor of the academy at which I was educated, who, when he was told one day that the chimney of the fire which warmed the building had ignited, and that the building itself would soon be in flames, went and deliberately put more coal into the furnace. It smothered the flame for a few moments, but by-and-by it intensified the fire. So, the more men cover up their convictions the worse shall be the issue. While I was a minister in Liverpool, there came into the river Mersey a cotton-laden ship which for the last ten days of her voyage had been on fire. By dint of skill and energy on the part of the captain and crew in battening down the hatches and excluding all external air, the danger had been kept down. At length, however, when she was brought to anchor, the hold was opened up, and then the flames leaped out apparently all the more furiously from their long confinement, and she burnt to the water's edge. So, my hearer, you may go through life covering up the hatchways of your conscience and keeping down its flames, and you may suc-

ceed for the time; but when you come to life's end, God himself will lay your bosom bare, and then its hidden fires of remorse will burst forth "fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell," yea, hell itself; and who shall be able to deliver you?

Notice, again, the hypocrisy of procrastination. Felix put Paul off nominally only for that time; but he never meant to call for him on the same business again. That "convenient season" never came. Still, somehow he flattered himself into the belief that he had not directly refused to do as God required, but had only delayed. He forgot that delay is refusal for the time. If, therefore, your refusal is rooted, as that of Felix was here, in a determination to remain in the practice of your sins, do not bid Christ or his messenger depart "for this time," and allege that it is only a convenient season you are waiting for. That is a sham, a mockery —in plain speech, a lie. Face the question thoroughly. Has Christ any right to you? *Yes?* or, *No?* If he has, then yield yourself to him at once; if he has not, then think no more about him. If Baal be God, follow him; but if Jehovah, then follow *him*. But do not prevaricate. Do not say one thing when you mean another, or make a promise which you have no intention whatever of keeping?

But suppose I admit that your procrastination is not a make-believe, and is pure dilatoriness, then reflect who it is that you are putting off after this fashion. It is not the preacher—it is not even an apostle—it is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and who are you that you should presume to keep him waiting your convenience? Reflect again on the uncertainties in the case: you are calculating on the future. But whose is the future? Whose is to-morrow? What is to-morrow? It is, so says the proverb, "the day when the idle man works, and the fool reforms." It is, says another, "a period nowhere to be found in all the hoary

registers of time, save perchance in the fool's calendar." It promises blessings which, if only you had eyes to see them, are already furnished by to-day, and which, if you neglect them now, you may never have another opportunity of acquiring. I have no Gospel for to-morrow. My commission is only for to-day. It is utterly uncertain whether we shall see to-morrow; and therefore it is the height of folly for any one to defer till then the settlement of the momentous matter of his soul's salvation. Besides, even if it were certain that we should see and enjoy the morrow, it will not be any easier then to break away from sin than it is to-day. Indeed, it will not be so easy; for the longer you continue in a course of sin, of whatever sort it may be, whether intemperance, or sensuality, or deceit, or covetousness, it will be the harder for you to give it up. The cords of habit, which at first are light as the spider's airy gossamer, grow thicker and thicker the longer it is indulged in; and each new act of conformity puts another coil of the cord, so thickened, round you; therefore, that which might have been snapped asunder at first as easily as Samson broke the withes, can, after years, be severed only, if severed at all, by agony and effort. The ivy, in its early creepings up the house side, may be cut down with ease; but if you let it alone long enough, it will so grow into the walls that you cannot remove it without taking down the building. Like it, a habit, if long-continued, will so grow into the soul that, when you try to tear it out, it will be like breaking your very heart-strings; and the longer it is practised, it will be the worse. If, therefore, you would not become helpless in the bondage of sin —if you would not add needlessly to the striving which, in any case, is required to enter in at the strait gate, then begin at once. Rise in the might of God's Holy Ghost, and put forth one sincere, believing, sustained and prayerful effort, and then the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus will set

you free from the law of sin and death which heretofore has ruled within you. "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Notice, in the last place, the fettering influence of sin as here illustrated. This was probably the crisis of the life of Felix. I do not believe that in all his earthly existence there was another occasion so important to him, or so fraught with possibilities of everlasting good to him, as this interview with Paul. I think I can see, too, that such better nature as he had was on the apostle's side. His mind was convinced by the reasoning of Paul. He knew he ought to do as the faithful and affectionate preacher had said, but he did not; and the reason why he did not gives the true explanation of his procrastination, and is full of warning to us all. He was held fast by the cords of his own sins. The things which he had done in his past life, and the connection into which he had entered with her who was sitting by his side, handicapped him so completely that, though he might otherwise have won the race, he could not even leave the starting-post. Will you think of that, you who are now indulging in sin, under the pleasing delusion that you may break away from it at any time and return to God? What know you but that when the decision has to be made, for good and all, you may be just as Felix was here—clogged by an encumbering past which will not let you move? You are making or unmaking yourself in daily conduct for the critical eras of your life—those narrow places "where there is no turning to the right hand or to the left." Yes! and those times may come—commonly do come—when you are not thinking of them; but when they come, if you have been living all along in sin, you may find yourself as powerless to meet the responsibilities of the moment, as the Laocoon were to extricate themselves from the folds of the serpent. Now, therefore, while you have the desire—now while God's

Spirit is striving with you—break away from the snares in which Satan would entangle you, lest when the call rouses you to exertion, you may discover, like Samson, that the Lord has departed from you; or, like Felix, that you cannot—and cannot because you do not choose to—break away from Drusilla even for the sake of Christ.

XXIII.

DEFENCE BEFORE AGRIPPA.

Acts xxv., xxvi.

CONCERNING Porcius Festus, by whom Felix was succeeded, we know little more than can be gathered or inferred from the sacred narrative. He seems to have possessed those characteristics which were peculiar to the better class of the educated Romans of his day. A cynic in philosophy, and a sceptic in religion, he was yet, probably, free from those debasing vices which disgraced his predecessor. As a judge, it is evident that he desired to do right, though in the beginning of his administration the wish to conciliate the people over whom he was to rule was sometimes, as in the case of Paul, permitted by him to override his better judgment; and he was ready to make concessions which were not in the interests of justice. But, after all qualifications have been made, he was a vast improvement on the mean, mercenary, cruel, and unscrupulous Felix. At a later date, he was not by any means so well-disposed toward the Jews as he appears in the narrative of Luke here; for when Agrippa had offended the inhabitants of Jerusalem by building a splendid dining-room, the window of which overlooked the Temple, and they had erected a wall to shut out his view, Festus took part with Agrippa, and ordered the wall to be pulled down. Against that command, the priests appealed to Nero, and under the influence of the vile Poppæa, who sought to atone for her vices by a profession of

interest in religion, they were sustained.* Festus did not long survive this imperial slight; for in the second year of his administration he died in his province.

When first he arrived at Cæsarea, he would very likely make a public entry into the city; and we may form some notion of the earnest purpose which he had to govern with discretion, from the fact that, after so brief an interval as three days, he went up to Jerusalem, in order that he might become acquainted with the ecclesiastical customs and dignitaries of the people. He remained there for a little over ten days, during which, among other requests presented to him, he received a petition from the high-priest and the chief men of the council to the effect that he would send Paul for trial to Jerusalem. Behold the undying enmity of these men! A new high-priest now wore the mitre, for Ananias, as we learn from Josephus, had by this time been replaced by Ishmael; a new governor had come to Cæsarea; but there was no change in the disposition of his adversaries toward Paul, save that their antagonism seems to have increased in intensity as the months rolled past. For their desire was not for justice; and if the governor had yielded to their entreaty, there would have been no trial of the apostle before any earthly tribunal whatever, since the conspirators, who two years before had sworn to assassinate him, were ready still to put him to the dagger. It is not certain that Festus saw through their plot, but he gave a reply, part of which is repeated by him in his conversation with Agrippa,† and part of which is recorded by Luke in his own narrative.‡ Putting both together, we have the substance of his answer in the following statement: "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that

* Josephus, Ant., xx., viii., 11.

† Acts xxv., 15, 16.

‡ Acts xxv., 5.

he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him; therefore Paul shall be kept at Cæsarea, and I shall myself depart shortly thither, when the principal men among you may accompany me and accuse the prisoner, if there be any wickedness in him." It is possible that in so deciding, Festus merely wished to consult his own convenience; but it is not improbable that he had found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, and considering that he had been sent from Jerusalem to Cæsarea at first, he might be led to infer that some underhand design was connected with the request of the high-priest. But whatever his motive was, he resisted the proposal of the Jewish magnates with the quiet determination of a man who was not accustomed to have his will opposed.

But he did not allow any time to be lost, and, so far as appears, he had no such mercenary disposition as that which moved Felix to delay, but was anxious to bring the case to a speedy and righteous issue. On the very next day after his return to Cæsarea, therefore, he held a court for the trial of Paul. As on the former occasion before Felix, the accusers of the apostle charged him with three several offences, namely, heresy, in following the sect of the Nazarenes; sacrilege, in profaning the Jewish Temple; and treason, in speaking against Cæsar. But he met all their assertions with a firm denial, saying, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended anything at all." The effect produced on the mind of Festus was one of perplexity. He had expected to hear some civil crimes laid to the charge of the prisoner; but instead, to borrow his own words, "they raised certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." This unlooked-for turn of the case disposed Fes-

tus to seek for light from the Jews themselves; and so, not more, perhaps, to show favor to them than to get some further information for himself, he proposed that Paul should go to Jerusalem and there be judged by the Sanhedrim, but with the safeguard of his presence. This was yielding to the Jews all they wished, and at the same time exposing Paul to the attack of the assassin; therefore, seeing no hope of any other outlet from his perplexity, and perhaps, also, for the first time, perceiving the door opening for his long-wished-for visit to Rome, he said, "I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I APPEAL UNTO CÆSAR."

Under the Roman Empire all the checks and balances which in the republic existed against individual authority were concentrated in the Emperor; hence, while in former days the people had the right of appeal to the tribunes for protection against patrician injustice, they had now the right of appeal to the emperor. Whatever influence was exerted under the republic by the pontifex maximus, or the censor, was now possessed by the emperor; and so, by a most ingenious device, all the safeguards which had been erected against tyranny in the republic were made the buttresses of autocracy under the empire. But though, in the majority of instances, the effect of all this was bad, and as a whole it tended to that centralization which is the perfection of imperialism, and the best means for the exercise of tyranny, yet in the case of Paul the result was beneficial. It removed his trial from the neighborhood of partisanship and intolerance, and insured that he would be carried to Rome under the protection of the imperial power. Yet, as no de-

cision had been pronounced on his case, there could not be, and there was not, an appeal in the modern sense of the term. The language employed by Festus, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem and there be judged?" implied that an accused citizen had the right of being tried either by the provincial magistrate or by the emperor; and since Festus seemed to be willing to share his jurisdiction with the Jewish council, Paul wisely preferred to have the whole question referred to Rome. In the case of such appeals the governor had a discretionary power, more or less elastic; and in all accusations of piracy or robbery, where the prisoners had been taken in the act, he might proceed to pass and execute sentence despite the appeal. So we read that Festus conferred with his council before he announced his decision, which he did at length, in these words: "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go." One hears a tone of wounded dignity or offended pride in this utterance, as if Paul had done him wrong in supposing that he had any improper motive in asking whether he would go to Jerusalem; but if he had known all the circumstances as Paul knew them, then he would have earnestly withstood the demands of the Jews, and set Paul free, or he would have been heartily glad to get rid of a case which was fraught with mischief, however it might have been decided by him. But, whatever his feelings might be, he could not refuse to give effect to the appeal of the apostle; and, therefore, he had nothing further to do in the matter than to make out the necessary papers, and send them and Paul as speedily as possible to Rome.

But he had great difficulty in the preparation of these documents; for the whole case related to questions concerning which he had no knowledge, and for which he had a supreme contempt. He could not specify the crimes laid to the charge of Paul; neither could he send the depositions

of any witnesses; and altogether he was greatly perplexed. While he was in this state of mind, Agrippa, the young King of Chalcis, accompanied by his sister Bernice, came to pay him a complimentary visit, on the occasion of his arrival in his province, and in the course of his conferences with his royal guest, knowing that he was acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews, he took occasion to submit the whole case to him for advice. On learning the particulars, Agrippa expressed a desire to hear Paul himself; and so, on the very next day, at the summons of Festus, a brilliant company convened in the court-room to listen to the venerable apostle.

But before we give a summary of his defence on this memorable occasion, it may be well to indicate the characters of those two royal personages who were the principal auditors, and for whose gratification especially the court was held. Agrippa, as we have said in our last lecture, was the son of that Herod who took such a prominent part in the persecution of the early Church, and who, in the midst of his pomp and pride, was smitten by the disease of which he died. When that event occurred, Agrippa was at Rome basking in the sunshine of imperial favor; but though Claudius had promised him his father's kingdom, he excused himself from keeping his word on the score of Agrippa's youth, and sent a procurator to take charge of Judæa, which thus relapsed into a province. Herod remained four years more at the imperial court, living the life of a voluptuary, and then, on the death of his uncle, he received the little province of Chalcis, with the right of superintending the Temple at Jerusalem and appointing the high-priest. At a still later date, he obtained the tetrarchies of Galilee and Abylene, with the title of king. At first he was somewhat popular among the Jews, because of his occasional intercession on their behalf at Rome; but latterly he acted in

such a way as grievously offended them. His character has nothing in it that evokes our admiration; and even heathen satirists made frequent and scathing references to the scandals which were connected with his name. As for his sister Bernice, she was one of the most dissolute of women; and her history, to borrow the words of Plumptre, "reads like a horrible romance, or a page from the chronicles of the Borgias."* She was the eldest daughter of Agrippa I., and was married, while little more than a girl, to her uncle Herod, of Chalcis. After his death, she came and lived, under circumstances of the foulest suspicion, with her brother. She was subsequently married to Polemon, King of Cilicia; but she left him and returned to her brother. Then, long after the events narrated in this chapter, we find her at Rome, sustaining an infamous relation to the Emperor Titus, which the public opinion even of that age would not tolerate, and so he was reluctantly compelled to dismiss her. Such were the principal personages before whom Paul was now called to plead. They were among the last of the Herodian race, and they had all the characteristics of the family to which they belonged; for though they possessed more than the average of mental ability, they were utterly godless, unprincipled, licentious and profane.

But, besides these royal personages, there was a large and brilliant assemblage. By their side was the procurator, probably in some official uniform; the principal inhabitants of the city were present in great numbers; magistrates, in their "furred gowns and flowing robes,"† and military officers, in all the glitter of their martial accoutrements, were there. Great was the blaze of glory and the pageantry of parade. And yet the noblest man in all that throng was

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* "Commentary for English Readers," edited by Bishop Ellicott, vol. ii., p. 164.

† Lewin, vol. ii., p. 175.

the meanest-looking in the crowd; for yonder, chained to a Roman soldier, the apostle is led in. As he enters, every eye is turned upon him, and remarks are freely made regarding him, so that a loud hum of general conversation rises from the multitude. But hush! the procurator speaks. He states the case with simple and comprehensive brevity; intimating that the Jews had cried that Paul ought not to live any longer, but that he himself had not found in him anything worthy of death, and expressing the hope that, from the hearing of that day, something definite might come out which he might transmit with the prisoner to the emperor, to whom he had appealed.

As Paul heard the words, "I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death," I can imagine how his heart thrilled with satisfaction at the discovery, now made by him for the first time, that Festus was convinced of his innocence; and when Agrippa said to him, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself," he was already in that rapturous and excited mood out of which all true eloquence is born. Trusting in the help which never failed him, he rose magnificently to the occasion, and delivered that address which, for dignity and grace, for simplicity and sublimity, for calmness and cogency, for manliness and courtesy, is almost unrivalled in the annals of oratory. He alludes with undissembled politeness to Agrippa's familiarity with Jewish matters; refers anew to his early life as a Pharisee, and declares again, as he did both at Jerusalem and before Felix, that he is now put upon his trial for his faith in that which had all along been the hope of the Jewish nation. Then, passing to the great central fact of the Gospel—the resurrection of Christ—he says, with admirable rhetorical abruptness, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" and proceeds to give testimony to the reality of Christ's resurrection by repeating the story of his own

conversion, in a manner which, though varying apparently in some particulars, is in substantial harmony with the other records that have been preserved. Then he sums up the years of his life since that memorable day at Damascus, in these words: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." At the mention of the resurrection, the scepticism of Festus got the better of his good-manners, and with a sneer he spoke thus, in a loud voice: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." He had heard the apostle refer to writings, and probably it had been told him that he was a diligent student, always busy at his parchments; so, as the very idea of a resurrection of the body was to him no better than a hallucination, he concluded that the close application of the prisoner had affected his brain. That was not the last occasion, by any means, on which the earnestness of faith in well-attested truth has been stigmatized as lunacy. Even to the Saviour himself it was said, "Thou hast a devil and art mad;" and the reproach which fell on him need not be a shock to us.

The apostle answered with noble calmness, saying, in the very language of philosophy itself, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and sober-

ness." Then, referring to the king's own knowledge in corroboration of his assertions, he exclaims, "The king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." As if he had said, "I have not invented these things. They are matters of public notoriety. The king knows that they are, and he knows, too, that the prophets say such things as those to which I have referred. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." As he paused for a reply, the monarch answered, "In a little, or with a little, thou persuadest me to be a Christian." There is a difference of opinion as to how these words are to be understood. Our translators, interpreting the phrase to mean "within a little," have rendered it by the one word "almost," and have taken it as the sincere expression of Agrippa's all but adherence to Christianity. Others, however, with greater grammatical accuracy, regard the whole utterance as sarcastical. The king uses the newly-coined word "Christian" with all its associations of scorn and contempt, and virtually, so they suppose, says something like this: "You make but a little matter of persuading me to be a Christian, but you will find it a harder thing than you seem to imagine." But whatever was the spirit of Agrippa's words, there is no possibility of mistaking the drift of the apostle, when, with a boldness and courtesy seldom seen combined in such large proportion, he said, "I would to God, that both in a little and in much, not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were such as I am;" then, glancing at the chain which bound him, and not wishing to include that in his desire for them, he lovingly added, "except these bonds." By much labor or by little, with great effort or with small, at the expenditure of longer time or shorter—that was of no matter to him; but it was his earnest desire that, anyhow, they

should all be as he was, lifted up above the fear of death, set free from the penalty of sin, delivered from the power of iniquity, and possessed of the fullest assurance of immortal glory.

It was a noble utterance; and we do not envy the man who can even read it without emotion. But what must it have been to hear it, as the speaker's face became radiant with the light of love, and the chain by which he was bound was pressed into his service, and made by him to clank its appeal to his hearer's hearts. We do not wonder at the excitement of Festus, or at the haste with which Agrippa dismissed the assembly. We marvel rather that the impressions made should have been so evanescent. But Agrippa and his friends were the real prisoners, and Paul the true freeman; and for my part, I had rather have the apostle's manacle of iron than that royal chain of pride and power, and gold and sin, with which these others were held bound.

After a brief consultation with each other, it was agreed between Festus and Agrippa that Paul might have been set at liberty; but since he had appealed unto Cæsar, they had no alternative, and must send him on to Rome as expeditiously as possible. How it fared with him on his voyage thither will appear in our next lecture. Meanwhile, let us gather up a few of the things profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness which may be found in these intensely interesting chapters.

Observe, then, in the first place, what is the central truth of the Christian system. It is a very suggestive fact that Festus had got hold of the kernel of the whole subject, as we see in his conversation with Agrippa, when he said, "Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusations of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and

of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Now, this can be accounted for only on the supposition that Paul had given special prominence to the resurrection of Christ. Nor is it at all surprising that he acted on that principle, for he was only following therein the example of the Lord himself. If we gather together all the references which Jesus made to his death and resurrection, we shall discover that his coming forth from the tomb of Joseph is not one proof merely, but a whole cluster of proofs attesting the deity of his person, the authority of his instructions, and the atoning efficacy of his death.* It is put forth by him as a sort of crucial test by which his claims were to be tried. He perilled his Deity upon it; and so, when he arose on the world's first Easter morn, that great miracle threw back its authenticating light on everything he had said and done during his earthly ministry. Now, appealing to a Jewish audience only thirty-one years after the event, and while yet it was feasible, if it had been possible, to disprove it, Paul refers to it as a thing of notoriety, and uses it to vindicate himself for becoming a Christian, and to authenticate the doctrines of Christianity. It was, and is, in fact, the very key-stone of the arch, and everything else depends on it. This is clear from the manner in which, in his speeches, discourses, and epistles, Paul constantly refers to it. Thus, does he proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God? then he affirms that he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."† Does he assert that God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained? then he adds,‡ "whereof he hath given assurance unto all men

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* See John ii., 18; Matt. xii., 40; xvi., 21; xvii., 22; John x., 17, 18; Matt. xx., 19. † Rom. i., 4. ‡ Acts xvii., 31.

in that he hath raised him from the dead." Does he proclaim that there shall be a resurrection of the dead? then he affirms that "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."* Nay, he goes so far as to allege to the Corinthians that if Christ is not risen their faith was vain, and they were yet in their sins.† Now, with such views of the resurrection of Christ, we can understand how Paul came to make so much of it that even Festus could not mistake his meaning, but understood that he affirmed that Jesus is alive; and it would be well if we in these days realized how much depends on preserving our faith in that great fact. Take the last chapter out of the Gospel, and you leave nothing behind that is then worth the keeping. Some, indeed, would persuade us that we may give up our faith in miracles, and in this one of the resurrection among the rest, while yet we can retain our faith in Christ; but that is a delusion. We may have faith then in some one whom we continue to call Jesus Christ; but he is no longer the Christ of the New Testament, of whom alone it is said that "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."‡ Others tell us that we may give up the fact of the resurrection, and yet retain a hold on the spiritual teachings of Christ; but that, too, is impossible, for then these teachings will lose their hold on us. If Christ did not rise, then there is no Christ alive now; and so we sever the bond of connection between the present and that far-off past which these gospels describe. It makes no matter how far the machine is from the engine that drives it, if only you have a connecting rod long enough to communicate the motion of the one to the other; but if there be no such rod, or if that rod be broken, the machine remains at rest despite the

* 1 Cor. xv., 20. † 1 Cor. xv., 17. ‡ Heb. vii., 25.

power of the engine. Now, similarly, the living Christ is to-day the rod of connection between me and the work which was done on Calvary; if I am united to him, the motive-power from that Cross will come into me, and stir me up to activity in obeying his commands, and carrying out the spirit of his teachings. But if he never rose from the dead, then his death stirs me no more than that of Socrates, and I cannot call him my Saviour any more than I can Plato. So let us see what we give up when we give up the resurrection of Christ. No resurrection, means no living Christ; no living Christ, means no new life in my soul from Christ; and that means no hope, no salvation, and no heaven. But "the Lord is risen!" The very existence of the Christian Church, with its weekly Easter service, through the years of eighteen centuries and a half, is itself a proof that he is risen. Now, therefore, let us rise with him, and "seek those things which are above, where he sitteth at the right hand of God."

Observe, in the second place, what is the normal type of the Christian man. Agrippa, in his reply to Paul's appeal, had used the newly-coined word, Christian, probably in scorn; but in his answer Paul paraphrases it into "such as I am." Let us, therefore, seek to get at the peculiarities of Paul, and we may thus bring out the distinctive features of the Christian life. These peculiarities were many; but for the present it may suffice if we make them all rotate round one—his *faith*. That faith had a peculiar object. It was not the cold abstraction of a creed that he believed, but the living, loving Christ that he trusted. He held doctrines, indeed—no man more firmly; but they were not to him the dead things they have often become in the hands of theologians, for they were vitalized by their connection with Christ. The truth to him was "the truth as it is in Jesus;" and the firmness with which he held it sprung out of the love he

bore his Lord. The Gospel to him was not what a system of philosophy is to the philosopher—a wrestling-ground for intellectual exercise—but it was a thing of personal conviction and attachment centring in Jesus. The Gospel, in his view, was no mere beautiful but lifeless statue: it was the living Christ. The Cross to him was no mere gilded crucifix, which one may wear for ornament or kiss for superstition; but it was the altar whereon Christ offered himself to God for him, and whereon, also, if need were, he was willing to offer himself to God for Christ.

But Paul's faith had also a peculiar influence. He was not one of those—of whom there are so many now—who seek to divorce religion from life. Nay, rather, his religion was his life, and his life was his religion. The two things interpenetrated each other. They were not so much two things as one; and you could no more separate the one from the other, than you can take the heart out of a living man and yet have life in either. Religion was the very atmosphere in which he lived and moved and had his being; and his faith regulated even the minutest details of his conduct. His faith was thorough, and sought everywhere, no matter at what sacrifice, to work itself out in every department of his nature. This thoroughness it was which had brought on him these bonds; it carried him to Rome; it made him resolute and unbending in the assertion of God's truth; it entailed on him a martyr's death, and secured for him a martyr's crown.

Now, behold in these two peculiarities of Paul's faith what it is to be a Christian. It is to have faith in the living, personal Saviour, Jesus Christ, and to have that faith itself a living thing pervading the conduct. Wherever these two things are, there you have "such a one as Paul;" whereever these two things are not, no matter what else of form and show you may have, there is really nothing worthy of

the Christian name. Tried by these tests, my hearer, what are you?

Observe, in the third place, the gate of entrance into the Christian life. This is illustrated both in Paul and in Agrippa. When the Lord appeared unto the apostle in the way to Damascus, he showed to him his glory, and gave to him a commission; but it was still possible for Paul to resist and disobey. He was "apprehended of God." But that was not all that was needed; he had also "to apprehend that for which he was apprehended;" and how he did that, he describes in this address, when he says, "Whereupon I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." That means that he promptly and unreservedly obeyed. But now look at Agrippa. In Paul's appeal a heavenly vision has been given to him also. He is exhorted to repent and be converted. He is urged to accept Jesus and his salvation; but he is disobedient, and resists the appeal, either with disdain or with a twinge of conscience which makes him feel that he is doing violence to his better nature. Anyhow—and this is the main point—he is not persuaded to become a Christian. This, then, is the strait gate through which each must pass into the narrow way: the being persuaded to be a Christian; the submission of the will to Christ; the rendering of obedience to the heavenly vision. The will is the rudder of the soul, and turneth it whithersoever it listeth; and when that will chooses to give in and give up to Christ, the man becomes a Christian. Thus, in a very solemn sense, God has placed our everlasting destiny in our own choice. If we receive life from Christ, it is because we will to come to him; and if we die eternally, it is because we will to die. No man becomes a Christian against his will; it is by willing to be so that he becomes a Christian, and it is over this willing that the whole battle of conversion has to be fought. There is no one here who may not be saved, if he will

That *if he will* is the Thermopylæ of the whole conflict, the narrow and intense hinge on which the whole matter turns —the gate into the Christian life. If a man is not a Christian, it is not because Christ's work has not been perfectly performed, or because his own sins are too great, or because the help of God's Spirit has been denied him, or because God has in sovereignty passed him by; but it is, on the testimony of the Lord himself, because "he will not come unto him for life." I know that the Holy Spirit's agency is needed; but that will never be withheld from him who seeks it. And in any case He cannot will for us. He cannot turn for us. He cannot obey for us. He works for a man by working in him and through him; and just as in the case of the poor paralytic no cure could have been performed if he had refused at Christ's bidding to arise, so no salvation can be enjoyed by any one who is disobedient to the heavenly vision. There is a divine agency, and there is a human agency; but the necessity of the divine does not absolve us from the obligation to perform the human, while we have no responsibility whatever for the divine. So, again, I come back to the assertion that there is no one here who may not become a Christian if he will. Oh, that dread power of will which God has conferred upon us! and how inconceivably awful the thought that eternity of weal or woe, of heaven or hell, depends upon our volition! We cannot rid ourselves of this responsibility; you cannot choose for me, nor I for you, and Eternity depends upon it. There it hangs, O sinner, trembling in the balance of thy choice! to which shall it preponderate?

Observe, finally, that short of this gate of entrance, no matter whether we be far or near from it, there is no salvation. I cannot tell whether Agrippa was sarcastic or sincere in his utterance; God knoweth: but if he was sarcastic, he was a long way from the gate; while if he was sin-

cere, he was standing at its very side; and as the nearer includes the more remote, we may point the lesson for both by saying that "almost saved," if it be no more, is in the end altogether lost, and that in the most melancholy circumstances. Many years ago, on a Saturday morning, while I sat in my Liverpool study preparing my sermon for the following day, a telegram was put into my hand announcing the wreck of the ship *Royal Charter* in Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, and asking me to go and break the news of her husband's death by drowning to the wife of the first officer. The ship had gone almost round the globe. She had been to Australia, and had been telegraphed as arrived at Queenstown on the previous night; so that she was anxiously expected that day in the Mersey. But during the early morning a furious gale—which I might rather call a terrible hurricane—sprung up, and she was driven to destruction on that fearful shore, with a loss of over four hundred lives. As I entered the house of my parishioner, I was met by her little boy, who came dancing to me, and shouted, "Papa's coming! papa's coming!" When I went into the parlor, I found the table spread in expectation of the arrival of him who would never cross the threshold again. I cannot tell how I performed my mission; but after I had told the heavy news, the woman seemed almost stricken into marble. Her grief was too deep for tears; and I can never forget how, as she seized my hand, the first words that came gasping out were these, "So near home, and yet lost!" I never saw human anguish like that. But oh! that is nothing to the agony that must wring the soul of him who is at last compelled to say, "Once I was at the very gate of life, and had almost entered in; but now I am in hell." Oh, may God grant that such a soliloquy may never be uttered by any one of us! and to that end let us imitate Saul at Damascus, rather than Agrippa at Cæsarea.

XXIV.

THE VOYAGE AND SHIPWRECK.

Acts xxvii.

A VOYAGE from Cæsarea to Rome was, in the apostle's days, a very formidable affair, because there were no regular and direct means of communication between Judæa and Italy. We have already seen that in his journey from Philippi to Jerusalem Paul had to take one ship from Neapolis to Patara, and another from Patara to Phenicia;* and even the greatest personages of the empire had sometimes to depend on such casual opportunities of transit as commerce might furnish. Thus, when Vespasian went to Rome, leaving Titus to prosecute the siege of Jerusalem, we are told that he sailed from Alexandria to Rhodes, and went thence through Greece to the Adriatic, which he crossed, and then passed through Italy overland to the capital. Again, when Titus hastened to rejoin his father, he also took passage in a merchant-ship, and touched, as Paul did, both at Rhegium and Puteoli.† We need not be surprised, therefore, to find that, when state prisoners had to be transmitted to the imperial capital, they were sent first a part of the way, in the hope that at an intervening port they might meet with some other ship by which they might be carried forward another stage toward their destination. Thus it was in the instance before us. Along with some other pris-

* Acts xx., 6; xxi., 2. † Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii., p. 218.

oners, concerning whom we have no information, Paul was intrusted to the care of a military escort belonging to the cohort of Augustus, and commanded by a centurion named Julius, who seems to have been characterized by amiability as well as determination, and who did much to promote the comfort of the apostle. Among the passengers were two men, who accompanied Paul, perhaps by the special favor of Festus, and who were moved by affection to go with him and minister to his wants. These were Aristarchus of Macedonia, whom we have met before at Ephesus, and Luke, the beloved physician, whose presence is modestly indicated, as usual, by his employment of the first personal pronoun throughout this portion of his narrative.

The ship in which they embarked was bound for Adramyttium, a seaport of Mysia, in Asia Minor, opposite to the island of Lesbos, and about a hundred miles due north of Smyrna. It was probably chosen because it was the intention of the centurion to go by the coasts of proconsular Asia, in one or other of the important seaports of which he felt certain of finding some vessel bound westward. On the first day they came to Sidon, where there were some Christian disciples; and where the centurion, already, as it would seem, favorably disposed toward Paul, allowed him to go on shore—accompanied, of course, by his military guard—and visit some friends, by whose fellowship he was refreshed. From Sidon they set sail with the purpose of making straight across the north-eastern angle of the Levant, south of Cyprus to the corner of Asia Minor; but as the wind was adverse, they were compelled to sail under the lee of Cyprus—that is, to the north of it, and not to the south, as in more favorable circumstances they would have done—that being the more direct course. At length they came to Myra, a town of Lysia, not very far to the east of Patara, where they found a corn-ship from Alexandria, bound for

Italy, and into that the soldiers and their prisoners, with the other passengers, were transferred. "Myra was almost due north from Alexandria; and it is not improbable that the same winds which forced the Adramyttian ship to the east (and north of Cyprus) drove the Alexandrian ship to Myra. The usual course from Alexandria to Italy was by the south of Crete; but when this was impracticable, vessels sailing from that port were accustomed to stand north till they reached the coast of Asia Minor, and then proceed to Italy through the southern part of the Ægean."* Thus this vessel was not out of her course at Myra, even if she had no call to be there for the purposes of commerce. She was also of larger tonnage than those unacquainted with ancient navigation would suppose; for she had a bulky cargo, and ultimately there were in all two hundred and seventy-six souls on board. From these facts we may conclude that she was of considerable burden. Indeed, the ships engaged in this corn trade between Egypt, the granary of the empire, and Rome, the great centre of consumption, were commonly of great size. In the very next chapter of this history we read of one which, in addition to her own crew and any passengers which she might be carrying, could and did, without inconvenience, accommodate the whole two hundred and seventy-six persons who had been shipwrecked on the coast of Melita; and Josephus tells us that there were more than six hundred people in the vessel in which he was wrecked. But perhaps the clearest idea of the size and appearance of such a ship may be obtained from the following description by Lucian of one which put into the Piræus wind-bound. We give the translation as made by Lewin:† "But what a ship it was! The carpenter said it was one hundred and

* H. B. Hackett, D.D., "Commentary on the Original Text of The Acts of the Apostles," p. 415.

† Vol. ii., p. 188.

eighty feet long and forty-five feet wide, and from the deck down to the pump at the bottom of the hold forty-five and a half feet. And for the rest—what a mast it had! and what a yard it carried! and with what a cable was it sustained! and how gracefully the stern was rounded off, and was surmounted with a golden goose—the sign of a corn-ship! and at the other end how gallantly the prow sprung forward, carrying on either side the goddess after whom the ship was named! And all the rest of the ornament — the painting and the flaming pennants, and above all the anchors, and the capstans, and the windlasses, and the cabin next the stern—all appeared to me perfectly marvellous! and the multitude of sailors one might compare to a little army! and it was said to carry corn enough to suffice for a year's consumption for all Attica! and this unwieldy bulk was all managed by that little, shrivelled old gentleman with a bald pate, who sat at the helm, twisting about, with a bit of a handle, those two monstrous oars on each side which served as rudders." On the whole, therefore, taking into consideration the trade in which she was engaged, and the number whom she accommodated, we may not be far wrong if we set down the ship in which Paul embarked at Myra as about fifteen hundred tons burden.

Leaving Myra, they sailed away slowly, for the wind was so contrary that it was with difficulty they came over against Cnidus. Probably the wind was blowing from the north-west—a direction which during certain months of the year it very frequently takes in that region; still, by keeping close to the shore, they could, by the help of the current and the land-breeze, bear up to Cnidus. That was a promontory between the islands of Coos and Rhodes; and so long as they were under its lee all was well; but the moment they attempted to round the cape, the full force of the north-west wind would come upon them. Here, therefore,

they put about; and, steering in a south-westerly direction, they with a great effort made and rounded the Cape of Salmone, the most easterly point of Crete. After that, sailing in the lee of the island of Crete, they came to Fair Havens, where they cast anchor. This name was given to two bays adjoining each other on the south coast of Crete, and a few miles east of Cape Matala, the most southerly point in the island. They were near a city named Lasea,* and though open to other points of the compass, they were sheltered from the wind against which the mariners were now contending. If they had attempted to double the promontory of Matala, their old enemy, the north-west wind, would have come directly down upon them, and blown right in their teeth; and so they lay in the Fair Havens waiting for favoring gales. After some delay, however, no change occurring in the wind, a council was held. The fast was past—that is to say, the great Day of Atonement in the Jewish calendar was over. It was now, therefore, about the date of the autumnal equinox; and the season during which, in that age, navigation in the Mediterranean was considered practicable was closed; so that they gave up all hope of reaching Italy that year, and came to the determination to winter somewhere. Paul advised that they should remain where they were. He had had considerable seafaring experience, since even before this voyage he had been three times shipwrecked;† and his judgment as an intelligent observer was that, if they attempted to go farther, they would endanger both the ship, the cargo, and the lives of the passengers and crew. As it turned out, this was very wise counsel; but the

* The ruins of this city were discovered just east of Fair Havens, by the Rev. George Brown, in Mr. Tennant's yacht *St. Ursula*, Jan. 16th, 1856. See "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St, Paul," by James Smith, Esq., of Jordan-hill, p. 82, and Appendix, No. 1.

† 2 Cor. xi., 25.

centurion, in whose power it seems to have been to settle the question, allowed himself to be swayed by the pilot and the owner, and gave his decision in favor of seeking for winter-quarters elsewhere, so soon as a good opportunity presented itself. There was a favorite harbor just on the other side of the promontory, and only a few hours' sail from where they were. It was then called Phœnix, or Phenice, and has been identified with the modern Lutro. For that, therefore, as soon as the weather moderated, and while the south wind was blowing softly, they set sail; and in the fulness of their assurance of reaching it with ease, they did not think it needful to take the little boat on board, but were content to tow it astern. When, however, they reached the point, there arose—not "against it," meaning the ship, as we have it in our version, but "down from it," meaning the promontory, or the island—a furious gale, blowing—as Mr. Smith, of Jordan-hill, in his admirable monograph on this chapter, has conclusively proved—from the east-north-east, and called Euro-aquilo.* Caught by such a sudden and violent storm, the vessel—so the phrase is, referring, perhaps, to the fact that an eye was very commonly painted on the bow—"could not look at the wind;" and therefore they let her scud before it, and ran under the lee of a small island called then Clauda, but now known as Gozzo. Here, taking advantage of the comparatively smooth water, they did three very needful things. First, as furnishing a means of escape if they should be cast on some shore, they took on board the little boat which all this while had been in tow. This was a

* Smith, following Tischendorf, Lachmann, Tregelles, and others, adopts, as sanctioned by the best MSS., the reading *Εὐρακύλων*, Euro-aquilo, an east-north-east wind, instead of *Εὐροκλύδων*, anglicized in our version Euroclydon. This view has been accepted by Alford and Howson in their later editions, and apparently also by Plumptre in Ellicott's "New Testament Commentary for English Readers," *in loco.*

work of some difficulty, not only from the violence of the storm, but also because the boat itself must by that time have been either swamped, or at least nearly full of water. Second, they undergirded, or, in modern phrase, "frapped," the ship. This was done by passing strong cables underneath the keel, and coiling them round and round the hull; and the purpose was to keep the vessel from straining, and so from springing a leak—a danger which specially beset ancient ships, since, in general, they had only one huge mast, which necessarily strained severely the middle of the vessel. Third, "they strake sail;" but, as Smith and Alford have shown, this clause might be more intelligently rendered, "they lowered the gear"—meaning that they made all "snug." Their object in this was to keep themselves from being driven before the wind on to the Greater Syrtis—a quicksand on the African coast; and so we understand that, in modern phrase, they "lay to," keeping her as close to the wind as possible, and putting her on what is called "the starboard tack;" that is, with her right side to the gale. This procedure, supposing the wind to be north-east, or more correctly east-north-east, would give as the direction of her drift west by north; and, taking the rate of her drift at thirty-six miles in the twenty-four hours—an average rate in similar circumstances, as Howson has affirmed, and many practical seamen have assured me—then, allowing that all the thirteen days the wind blew from the same quarter, we have for thirteen days a distance run of four hundred and sixty-eight miles, which, curiously enough, is within a few miles of the actual distance of St. Paul's Bay, in Malta, west by north from the island of Clauda. But I must not anticipate.

On the second day the tempest continued, and probably, in spite of all their precautions, a leak had sprung; for they lightened the ship of everything that could be spared.

On the third day matters became worse; and it is said they "cast out with their own hands the tackling of the ship." The word rendered "tackling" is explained by Smith to mean the "main-yard," an immense spar nearly as long as the ship, which it would require the united efforts of passengers and crew to launch overboard. He adds that "the relief which a ship would experience by this would be of the same kind as in a modern man-of-war when the guns are thrown overboard." Even this, however, does not seem to have very much improved their situation; for the storm still raged, and the uncertainty of their position was increased by the fact that, owing to the cloudiness of the sky, they could see neither the sun by day nor the stars by night. Add to this that the water seems to have been gaining on them all the while, and you will have a vivid idea of the dismal circumstances in which they were placed, and will not wonder that there was much abstinence, for there would be little opportunity and less inclination to have anything like regular meals.

In this season of utter hopelessness, Paul stood forward with calm self-possession and noble Christian faith, and made an announcement which must have comforted and reassured his fellow-voyagers. He referred to the advice which he had given at Fair Havens, not so much, however, to taunt them for rejecting it, as to secure their confidence in that which he was now about to say. He bade them be of good cheer; for he was persuaded that, though it would be impossible to save either the ship or the cargo, there would yet be no loss of life among them; and he gave, as the foundation on which this conviction rested, the fact that the angel of Him whose he was and whom he served had appeared unto him, and declared not only that he himself should stand before Cæsar, but also that the lives of all who were with him had been given to his entreaty. "Wherefore,

sirs," he adds, with happy cheerfulness and simple trust, "be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island."

At length, after having been driven—not "up and down," as we have it in our version, but—through the Mediterranean for thirteen days, on the fourteenth night, about midnight, the sailors "deemed that they drew near to some country." We are not told what the indications were which led them to this conclusion; but, taking into consideration the darkness in which they were, we may believe that they heard the sound of breakers. If this were so, it is an interesting coincidence that in approaching St. Paul's Bay, the traditional site of the shipwreck, from the east, the voyager must pass near the point of Koura, where the land is "too low to be seen on a stormy night, but where the breakers can be heard at a considerable distance, and in a north-easterly gale are so violent as to form on charts the distinctive feature of that headland. On the 10th of August, 1810, the British frigate *Lively* fell upon these breakers in a dark night, and was lost. The quartermaster, who first observed them, stated in his evidence at the court-martial, that at the distance of a quarter of a mile the land could not be seen, but that he saw the surf on the shore."* Immediately on their suspecting that land was near, the sailors, who exhibited good seamanship all through, heaved the lead, and found a depth of twenty fathoms; then, taking a second sounding shortly after, they found fifteen. They judged, therefore, that they were rapidly approaching some shore, and took prompt measures to avoid destruction by

* H. B. Hackett, D.D., "Commentary on the Original Text of The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 434, 435. The same evidence is referred to by Smith, pp. 130, 131.

casting four anchors out of the stern. This has been regarded as so unnatural, that some have ridiculed the statement as absurd. But though among the ancients, as among ourselves, the common practice was to anchor from the bow, yet provision was made in their ship for doing just what is here described; for among the paintings in Pompeii one has been found of a vessel having hawse-holes in the stern, and Howson assures us that even in the present day we may see in the Golden Horn, at Constantinople, ships anchored in this peculiar way. It is a well-known fact that, at the Battle of Copenhagen, Nelson, who had been reading this chapter of The Acts that very morning, ordered that all the line-of-battle ships should be anchored by the stern; and I have myself been informed by an experienced ship-master that in the Chinese seas this course is frequently adopted. In the instance before us, there were good reasons for taking such a plan. Remember, these sailors had no idea where they were. For anything they knew, they might be so near the rocks that if they allowed the ship to swing round by the bow, she might have grounded at once. Besides, their only hope, when the morning should dawn, was to run her ashore at some safe place, and by anchoring in this way they could more speedily bring her under control when they should cut the cables and make that last attempt for their lives. All this, as we shall afterward find, they did.

But, immediately after the anchors had been cast, a new danger threatened, in the selfish attempt made by the sailors to save themselves by taking to the boat, and leaving the passengers to their fate. They were in the act of lowering the boat on the pretence of taking another anchor out of the bow, when the apostle, divining their purpose, directed the attention of the centurion to their conduct, saying, "Except these men abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." At once he commanded the soldiers to cut the ropes by

which the boat was suspended, and, much to the mortification of the seamen, it was allowed to go adrift.

As the morning was drawing near, Paul stood forth once more as a counsellor and comforter. He tenderly referred to the privations through which they had passed, and, assuring them of their ultimate safety, besought them to eat while they had the opportunity, and thereby strengthen themselves for what was still before them. Then, having taken bread in his own hands, he gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and began to eat. The effect of this was excellent. It raised the spirits of the company, and prepared them for the hardships of the next few hours. But what a scene it must have been! If I had the skill of an artist, I should like to paint it as I see it all before the eye of my imagination now—these two hundred and seventy-five persons, all pale and careworn, standing round the calm apostle in the darkness, amid the pelting rain, while he lifts his voice above the roaring of the wind and the boom of the breakers, and gives thanks to God. The hardy sailors are lost in wonderment at his behavior; the stern soldiers are hushed into silent reverence by his deportment; the passengers know not what to make of his words, and there are only Luke and Aristarchus to say Amen at his giving of thanks. But the influence of that act of his is living yet. It was a little thing to do. The neglect or omission of it might never have been observed; but the doing of it was to these forlorn passengers at the time, and has been to most readers of the story since, a sermon on Christian gratitude more eloquent than the appeal of the orator, and more convincing than the reasoning of the logician.

Refreshed by this extempore meal, the sailors took new means to insure their safety by casting the cargo out of the hold. Perhaps it had shifted in the gale; and, in any case,

as their purpose was to run ashore, it was important to make the ship as light as possible. At length, when the morning dawned amid a down-pour of rain, the shore was clearly seen, but the sailors did not recognize the land. Nor need we be surprised at that; for St. Paul's Bay is on the north shore of Malta, which was out of the usual course of ships, and therefore not likely to be known from the sea, though as soon as they landed they discovered that they were on Melita. After they descried the land, their first care was to look for a place at which they might run the vessel aground; and they very soon made choice of a certain "creek with a shore," that is, "with a sandy or pebbly beach." In making for that, they did three things, which, though they are separately described, must have been performed simultaneously. First, "they took up the anchors"—or, rather, as it is in the margin, "they cut away, or cut round the hawsers that held the anchors, leaving the latter in the sea;" second, "they loosed the rudder bands"—that is, they dropped into the water the steering paddles, which had been trussed up out of the way of the anchor cables, and so brought the vessel at once under control; third, they hoisted what is here called "the main-sail," but what corresponded rather to the foresail among us, the object being to give the ship greater way, and thus at once increase the power of the steering gear, and carry the vessel with more impetus upon the beach.

Thus, then, they made for the shore, and ran aground in a place where two seas or currents met. The explanation of these currents is to be found in the fact that, just at the extremity of St. Paul's Bay, there is a small island (Salmonetta), which, from the point where the ship was anchored, would seem to be a part of the main-land of Malta, but which, as they came nearer the shore, would be seen to be an island. Through the strait, between this island and the

shore, a strong current swept; and that, meeting the swell which the storm had created, made the bay a place where two seas came into collision. When the vessel grounded, "the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves." Of this Mr. Smith gives the following lucid explanation: "The rocks of Malta disintegrate into very minute particles of sand and clay, which, when acted upon by the currents, or by a surface agitation, form a deposit of tenacious clay; but in still water, where these causes do not act, mud is formed. It is only, however, in the creeks where there are no currents, and at such a depth as to be undisturbed by the waves, that mud occurs. In Admiral Smyth's chart of the bay, the nearest soundings to the mud indicate a depth of about three fathoms, which is about what a large ship would draw. A ship, therefore, impelled by the force of a gale into a creek with a bottom such as that laid down in the chart, would strike a bottom of mud graduating into tenacious clay, into which the forepart would fix itself and be held fast, while the stern [would be] exposed to the force of the waves."*

At this point the soldiers, remembering that they were answerable for their prisoners with their lives, advised the centurion to kill them all; and in these unscrupulous times their counsel might have prevailed, but for the fact that the commanding officer, conscious of the obligations under which Paul had laid them, and drawn to him also, perhaps, by some personal regard, determined to save his life. So he gave command that those who could swim should save themselves, and that the rest should float ashore by the help of "boards and broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."

* "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul," fourth edition, p. 144.

Thus ends this deeply interesting story of storm and shipwreck. I have given a connected view of the narrative, without breaking in upon the continuity with any practical reflections, because I wish you to get a clear conviction of its value as furnishing, in itself, a very cogent proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the history of which it forms a part. Two things are patent to every reader. First, it is the production of an eye-witness who tells what he saw; and it reads as naturally as does the deposition before a court of inquiry, of some survivor from shipwreck in our own times. Second, it is the work of one who was himself a landsman, and therefore it is unprofessional and free from all technical terms. But this avoidance of sea-phrases only enables the writer to describe with more artless truthfulness all that passed before his eyes. As one has said, "It is just where a landsman makes the most ridiculous exposure of his ignorance, that the historian has ventured on details as minute as those of a Marryat or a Cooper."* Now, with these two things in mind, let any one take up the work on "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul," by Mr. Smith, of Jordan-hill, and observe how that painstaking investigator, sailing repeatedly over the same waters, has verified the statements of Luke in every particular, and he will obtain the conviction out of which nothing will be able to shake him, that this whole narrative was written by one who speaks the simple and unvarnished truth. A landsman who was trying to forge a story could not have so accurately described the manœuvring of a ship; and if a seaman had undertaken to give an account of it, he would have done it in a very different manner. Thus we have in this chapter another incidental argument for the credibility of Luke's narrative as a whole. The estimate which I have of its

* "The New Testament History," by William Smith, LL.D., p. 539.

value in this regard has impelled me to go somewhat minutely into its consideration; and I have failed where I was most anxious to succeed, if I have not made you sharers with me in the conviction which I have just expressed.

But, though I have detained you thus long on the exposition of the story, I cannot let you go without pointing out to you a few of the lessons in which it is so rich.

We are reminded, then, in the first place, of the consolatory truth which has passed into one of our common proverbs, that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." It was after "all hope that they should be saved had been taken away" that the angel of the Lord appeared unto Paul, and gave him the assurance that no life should be lost. On several other occasions in the history of the apostle a celestial messenger came to him with comforting words, and each time the consolation was imparted when all human help seemed impotent. God delays long enough to let our helplessness become apparent, and then he comes in such a way as to leave no doubt in our minds that the relief is divine. Admirably has this truth been brought out in that psalm* of God's loving-kindness which has become so precious to us as the traveller's hymn. To the wanderers in the desert, to the prisoners in the dungeon, to the sailors on the deep, he came only when, constrained by their extremity, they cried to him for succor; and as we have been reviewing this chapter in the apostle's history, we cannot but have had recalled to our memories that graphic description, "They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord," and forthwith—

* Psa. cvii.

"The storm is changed into a calm
At his command and will,
So that the waves, which raged before,
Now quiet are and still."

In the present instance, indeed, it is not said in so many words that Paul prayed unto the Lord; but in the angel's words to him, "Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee," there is an implication that he had asked this great favor from his Master; and in any case the whole history teaches us that when we are clearly on God's business, he will take care of us, and in the time of our greatest peril will send us his richest help. "A man is immortal till his work is done;" and if God wishes us to bear testimony for him in Rome, he will find the means of taking us thither; while if our course on earth is finished, he will receive us to himself. What strength there is in that consideration to all who are engaged in the service of Christ! God himself will be our shield so long as he requires us to labor for him on earth; and neither the conspiracies of malignant men, nor the fury of the elements, can harm us until our work is finished. While he needs us we bear charmed lives; and then, when we are no longer required, he will be our support in death.

We are reminded, in the second place, that faith is the root of courage. I do not know that there is, in the whole compass of the Word of God, a more beautiful or a more simple example of the nature and results of faith, than that furnished by Paul when he says, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." If any one wishes to learn what it is to have faith in Christ, we can give him no better answer than this: "It is to believe the Lord Jesus that it shall be even as he has told us, when he has said, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace.'" Then—as to the effect produced by

this faith—observe how calm, how cheerful, how courageous Paul was. He was in perfect peace because his mind was stayed on God; and when our souls confide in the divine assurances, we too shall be at rest. No doubt Paul's calmness here is to be traced to the angel's message; but yet, though there had been no pledge given him that no life should be lost, he would, from what we know of him, have been just as tranquil. The man who could look forward to martyrdom and say, "I am now ready to be offered," would not have been dismayed at the thought of being drowned; and often, in the history of modern commerce, we have had most moving instances of the power of divine grace in supporting men and women in the moment of death by shipwreck. Away back some thirty or more years ago, when the *Pegasus*, on her voyage from Leith to London, went down, the Rev. Morell Mackenzie, one of the passengers, was seen standing forth to the very last, preaching the Gospel to his fellow-passengers, and he went down with the message of salvation on his lips. Nor can I forget the impression made upon me when I heard of the venerable Dr. Burns, of Glasgow—an old man of more than fourscore years—who, when the steamer *Orion* went down upon the Scottish coast, was last seen by the survivor who described the wreck to me, kneeling, with his head uncovered, beside the smoke-stack; and thus, commending himself into the hands of God, sunk into the deep. In more recent times all Christendom was stirred by the account given by one of the survivors from the steamship *City of London*, of the Rev. Daniel Baker, a Methodist clergyman from Australia, who, just before the ship went down, gave out in the midst of the passengers in the cabin, and led in the singing of the hymn, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul"—a hymn which I rarely read now without thinking of that scene, which hangs in my imagination a companion picture to that of Paul as to-night I have described him.

And, to mention no more, who among us has forgotten the touching descriptions which came some five years ago from the survivors of the *Ville du Havre?* I saw a letter, written by a mother concerning one of her daughters, from which I select the following words: "Lallie threw her arms around me, and said, 'Forgive me, mamma, if I have ever done wrong.' (We started in haste for the other side of the ship—water all about us.) 'Don't be frightened, mamma and Helen; it will only be a moment's struggle, and then we will be in heaven together.'" Could anything more satisfactorily demonstrate the value of faith in Christ than such incidents as these? Oh, my friends, get that; for it is an anchor that shall never start. Get it now, for it is as valuable amid the storms of temptation on land as it is amid the dangers of the sea.

We are reminded, thirdly, that God's promise does not absolve us from the necessity of using means. Though the Lord had assured Paul that no life would be lost, the apostle would not allow the sailors to leave, but said, "Except these men abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved;" and in the after events we see how necessary they were for the beaching of the vessel. Now that incident throws considerable light on some dark passages of the New Testament. It helps to explain to us how, though Paul said, "Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God," he also said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* It assists us to understand how, though there is an eternal election of men to salvation, there is need for personal faith and vigilance if we wish to be saved; and it is a stern rebuke to those who fold their hands in idleness, and say, "If I am to be saved,

* Rom. viii., 39; 1 Cor. ix., 27.

I shall be saved." Paul believed in God's purposes and promises, but he was no blind fatalist for all that; for he held as earnestly by the necessity of human activity as he did by the reality of the divine foreordination. He did not run away with one-half of the truth, and maintain that he had got the whole truth; but, looking on the subject in the light of God, he saw both sides of it, and held them both with equal tenacity.

Finally, we are reminded how good it is to be in the company of Christian men. The crew and passengers of this ship were saved for Paul's sake. Every clergyman who has ever made a voyage of any length knows how the sailors banter him about being unlucky, and speak of him and his brethren as Jonahs; but always, when I have been so assailed, I have brought up this case of Paul, and then the laugh has been on the other side; for here the sailors do not show to the best advantage. One Paul saved this whole company. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom; and it is the Christian men in New York to-day who are preserving it from putrefaction. They are the salt of the city; and so long as they keep their savor, there is little to fear; but if the salt shall lose its savor, the end will be near. Here, then, I take my stand for my final appeal to-night. I ask you to become more positive, more aggressive, more upright, more earnest in your Christianity, that you may lift the city up to a nobler moral elevation, and may keep the ship of the State from peril. Act so that your fellow-citizens may "learn by experience" that God is with you, and is blessing them for your sakes. Remember that the Christianity of the land is its only true conservative influence. This is our safeguard; and so, as patriots no less than as men of piety, as citizens no less than as Christians, I beseech you to conduct yourselves in such a way that you may raise the whole moral tone of the

community, and make politics a branch of Christian ethics. A few Pauls among us would do the work. Give us men who believe God—that it shall be as he has told us, in the high places of our government, in our chairs of office, and in our halls of legislature, and that will insure us a prosperity which no storm of selfishness or whirlwind of partisanship shall ever imperil.

XXV.

MALTA, PUTEOLI, AND APPII FORUM.

Acts xxviii., 1–15.

RESCUED from the perils of shipwreck, the first care of Paul and his fellows was to discover where they were; and very soon, as the result either of direct inquiries of the inhabitants or of investigation by the sailors, they found that they had been cast on the shore of Melita. As we intimated in our last discourse, almost all scholars are now of opinion that this name designates our modern Malta, and the point may be considered as having been conclusively settled by the exhaustive researches of Mr. Smith. No doubt, in the northern portion of the Gulf of Venice there is an island which was anciently called Meleda; and some, among whom we are surprised to find one so eminent as Coleridge, have contended that we must look there for the scene of the events with which we are now concerned. But—not to say that it seems unaccountable that a vessel, caught in a gale which made the sailors afraid lest they should be driven southward on to the Syrtis, should yet drift away seven hundred miles to the north, nor to insist on the fact that such a place was altogether out of the usual course of Alexandrian corn-ships, so that the wintering in it of a vessel like the *Castor and Pollux* was most unlikely —the positive grounds in behalf of the identification of Melita with Malta are irresistible.

In the first place, tradition has all along connected that island with the shipwreck of the apostle; and though, in the

absence of all other proofs, we could not depend on that evidence alone, yet when we find other arguments converging toward the same conclusion, we are warranted in referring to it as corroborative. Further, Malta answers all the requirements of the narrative. It lies from Clauda precisely in the direction in which a vessel, handled as we described last Sabbath evening, would drift; and its distance from Clauda corresponds to that over which such a ship would pass when "laid-to" for thirteen days; while the locality of St. Paul's Bay not only fits the description here given, but actually enables us to understand it more clearly. We have the lowland first heralded by breakers; we have to this day the soundings as here given; we have the place where two seas meet, and the creek with a sandy beach; and so everything agrees with what is here delineated. Moreover, the island of Malta is in the direct line of ships sailing from Alexandria to Italy; and so we do not wonder at finding another corn-ship wintering there. True, it may be said, that this consideration tells also against Malta, inasmuch as the sailors might have been presumed to know any part of the coast of that island; but in answer to that it must not be forgotten that St. Paul's Bay is on the northern side of Malta, and hence would not be seen by them on ordinary occasions.

The objections which have been raised against this view are quite untenable. It has been said, for example, that Malta is in the Mediterranean and not in the Adriatic; and no doubt, in the modern sense of the term Adriatic, this is true; but in Roman literature the name Adria was frequently used in such a way as to include a large portion of the Mediterranean. Again, it has been said that there are now no snakes in Malta, and so the presence of the viper here must be held as conclusive evidence that it cannot have been Melita; but to that it is answered that in proportion

as the density of population in a place increases, the wild beasts diminish in numbers, and ultimately disappear altogether. Now, Malta is remarkable to-day for the density of its population; for, except in some of our own large cities or in the manufacturing districts of England, we shall scarcely find anywhere so many people within so small an area as there are there. Finally, it is alleged that in the apostle's days the inhabitants of Malta were in an advanced state of civilization, whereas in this narrative they are styled "barbarous people." But to that it is only necessary to reply that the term "barbarous" here refers to the language of the people and not to the absence of civilization from the island. To a Greek, every man who could not speak his polished language was a barbarian; and by a Roman, every one who could not understand Latin was called by the same name. If proof of this be required, we have it in the fact that, when in his Epistle to the Corinthians Paul is reasoning concerning tongues, he says, "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me."* I have been thus particular on a matter of mere locality, not because it has any great intrinsic importance, but because, in these days, when European travel is so popular, some of you may have the opportunity of visiting Malta, and I wish that it may have in your minds an abiding interest as the indubitable scene of the incidents which are here recorded.

The conduct of the inhabitants of Malta on the occasion before us was in the highest degree praiseworthy. Unlike those wreckers that have sometimes been met with on the shores of nominally Christian lands, these heathens proved their humanity by showing kindness in a rough-and-ready,

* 1 Cor. xiv., 11.

but yet also in a serviceable and substantial manner. Seeing the shipwrecked ones shivering in the cold and rain, they kindled a fire for them and received them every one, *i.e.*, they took them at once to their hearts. But even here Paul was a leading spirit among his companions; and by a little thing he showed at once the active energy and kindly thoughtfulness of his character. He gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire. Hardly had he done this, however, when a venomous serpent, which had probably been lying torpid among the brushwood, but was roused into energy by the heat, leaped up and fastened on his hand. By this, however, he was not disturbed, for he quietly shook the reptile off into the fire, and felt no harm. Here was a clear miracle. True, it is not said in so many words that he was bitten, and that he was kept from death by the special agency of God, but all that is implied in the condensed narrative of the historian; and, with Dean Alford, we can only characterize as disingenuous shifts the statements of rationalists and semi-rationalists who will have us to believe either that the reptile did not bite or that it was not venomous.* There can be no doubt, I think, that Luke brings this forward as one of the signs and wonders by which Jesus had promised to confirm the word of his apostles, and as furnishing a specimen of the fulfilment of the Saviour's assurance: "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." † The natives of Malta were deeply impressed with what they saw; and we have here an interesting description of the different phases of astonishment through which they passed, and the different conclusions at which they arrived as they looked

* Alford's "Greek Testament," *in loc.* † Mark xvi., 17, 18.

on. First, they supposed that Paul must have been a sinner of the deepest dye, most probably a murderer; and that though he had escaped the sea, the great goddess Justice would not suffer him to live. So they continued to watch him intently, expecting every moment to see him die, but to their amazement, after a great while, they marked no change upon him; and then swinging at once to the other extreme, they inferred that he was a god.

In all this there was a curious mixture of truth and error, showing us into what mistakes men are liable to fall without the rectifying and illuminating influence of revelation. Clearly there was in the minds of these people a strong belief in the great principle of retribution. The word rendered "vengeance" rather signifies justice; and as it has the article before it, we most naturally read it as a proper name, and refer it to the goddess, so called, of Justice, whose special office, in the ancient mythology, was to visit iniquity with righteous retribution. Now, though there was in this manner of speech all the corruption of idolatry, and though there had been nothing in Paul to make their words in any degree appropriate to him, yet do not fail to observe that there was a clear acknowledgment of the truth that wrongdoing ought to be punished, and that, in the world generally, it does meet with its requital. In other words, they recognized the moral element in the government of the world. This is an important fact, as furnishing evidence that even the uninstructed human conscience does intuitively assent to the doctrines of responsibility and retribution.

But with that substratum of truth there was mingled the error that special calamity invariably indicates special guilt. Nor need we wonder at the existence of this mistake among them when we find it among others who apparently possessed far higher advantages. Thus, the friends of Job took up the same position in their debate with him; the Jews who

came to Jesus telling him of those whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices held, apparently, the same view; and even the disciples of the Lord Jesus seem to have been tainted with the same heresy, when they asked concerning the blind man, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" It is not surprising, therefore, that these Maltese heathens should have fallen into this error. But let us be warned by their mistake. We must not judge the character of others from the sufferings through which they are called to pass. God has more purposes than one for the affliction of his people to subserve, and it may be that he designs to show his own glory through them rather than to mark his displeasure at any special guilt. Thus it was in Job's case. There, as here, the serpent fastened on the man of God, and sought to poison him with his venom, so that he should curse God and die; but the saint with quiet patience shook him off and felt no harm. We must not condemn a man, therefore, because he seems to be peculiarly afflicted. If Paul was on that ground once taken for a murderer, we may sometimes falsely reckon a humble saint to be a godless hypocrite.

From one extreme the heathens ran to another; so that he whom they viewed as a murderer they regarded a short time after as a god. Here, again, there was a mixture of truth and error. There was truth in their belief that a miracle had been performed, and that the direct agency of God had been at work; but there was error in the conclusion which they drew, to the effect that Paul himself was a god. The truth had its root in the intuitive tendency of the human mind to find an adequate cause for every effect; the error arose from the corrupting mythology of their heathen faith, which taught that the gods were men exalted, and, so to say, exaggerated and intensified. The great attribute of Godhead, in their view, was power; and men who showed that

in any marked degree were deified. Still, in rejecting the error which they held, let us give prominence to the truth which they acknowledged. Their error was the exaggeration and distortion of a truth; for though they were wrong in accounting Paul a god, they were right in ascribing to divine agency his preservation from death, and herein they were greatly in advance of those modern writers who, having refined away the personality of God into a dreamy pantheism, deny the possibility of miracles, and sneer at all belief in them as credulity or superstition. We must not follow these Maltese into either of the extremes into which they ran, but we are bound to recognize the element of truth which there was in both, all the more that in these days both have been elaborately repudiated by philosophers, who, in their devotion to scientific pursuits without them, have neglected the intuitions of the mind within them.

But this incident of the viper was not the only miracle connected with Paul's sojourn in Malta. In the neighborhood of the spot where the shipwreck occurred the chief man or governor of the island lived. Under the empire, Malta was an appanage to the province of Sicily, and was governed by a lieutenant appointed by the Sicilian prætor. This official, as appears not only from the words of Luke here, but also from certain inscriptions which have been discovered in the island, had the title of "the first of the Maltese." At the time of the apostle's shipwreck, the governor was one Publius, "who courteously entreated" some of the sufferers, and lodged them in his own house for three days. In so doing he "entertained" at least one "angel unawares," and discovered the quality of his guest only when, by prayer and the laying on of his hands, Paul raised up his father from a severe and dangerous attack of dysentery.

Such a work, not only from its miraculous character, but also from the exalted station of him who was cured by it,

would soon be noised abroad among the people, and as a natural consequence "others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed." We do not read that the apostle preached the Gospel here, but we may be sure that he embraced every opportunity of commending the Lord Jesus to his fellow-men as their Saviour and guide; and that he did so with great success we may conclude from the fact that, when he and his fellow-voyagers left the island, the inhabitants loaded them with gifts.

For three months Paul sojourned in this place; and as the shipwreck occurred shortly after the autumnal equinox, we may infer that he left it about the month of January following. A corn-ship from Alexandria, whose sign was *Castor and Pollux*—favorite deities with sailors—had spent the winter in the harbor of the island; and in it accommodation was found for the shipwrecked passengers and crew. Setting out from the port, they sailed northward, along the coast of Sicily, calling at Syracuse, where they spent three days, and where, as there were many Jews residing in the city, Paul perhaps contrived to say something concerning the Gospel to his kinsmen according to the flesh. Thence, tacking, that they might make the most of an unfavorable wind, they came to Rhegium, on the Italian coast. There they remained for one day, and then, catching a southern breeze, they set sail again, making the harbor of Puteoli within twenty-four hours.

This place was situated in the northern part of that bay (of Naples) which is perhaps the most celebrated in the world. It was the haven into which all the Alexandrian corn-ships put, and was one of the most important harbors of ancient Italy. From the particulars furnished by classical writers, we may form a tolerably accurate idea of the animated scene which marked the arrival of Paul and his companions.

Rounding the promontory of Minerva, and keeping on the left the island of Capreæ—still loathsome from its association with the impurities and cruelties of Tiberius—the full sweep of the magnificent bay would open up to the delighted gaze of the apostle. There in the very centre of the picture rose Vesuvius—not as we know it now, surmounted with its pillar of smoke by day and fire by night, but covered to its very summit with vineyards; while at its base to the right stretched away the beautiful streets of Pompeii, and to the left rose the proud villas of Herculaneum. Who could then have foreseen that within a few years that mountain of beauty would burst forth with the desolating fury of a mad volcano, and bury those queenly cities beneath a heap of ashes! Farther along, beyond Herculaneum, and in a beautiful bend of the coast, was Neapolis, now Naples; then beyond, in another minor bay, separated from Naples by a small headland, now called Posilippo, was Puteoli; then, on the opposite side of this little bay, was Baiæ—the watering-place of Rome, combining in itself the medicinal springs of Saratoga with the maritime advantages of Newport; while still farther along was Cape Misenum, with the imperial fleet riding at anchor beside it, waiting the orders of its admiral.

At Puteoli an immense pier or mole had been erected, consisting of twenty-five arches, of which the ruins of thirteen yet remain; and along-side of this the vessels came to discharge their passengers and cargo. On this pier, too, great crowds commonly assembled at the arrival of these Egyptian vessels. Seneca, in one of his letters, has given a vivid description of the scene. Thus he writes: "Suddenly to-day Alexandrian vessels, which are wont to be sent forward to herald the arrival of a fleet, appeared. They call them letter-carriers or packets, and the sight of them is welcome to all Campania. All the crowd collects upon the

mole of Puteoli and recognizes Alexandrian corn-vessels from a whole fleet of others by their sails—for they alone are permitted to enter the harbor with their top-sail set. So soon as they come between Capreæ and the promontory of Minerva others are ordered to be content with the lower sail; the top-sail is the mark of an Alexandrian ship;"* and then he goes on to tell of the multitude hurrying to the harbor, of their discourse by the way, and his own reflections thereon. Now, it was most likely into the midst of such a throng that Paul first stepped when he landed on Italian soil, his prisoner's chain clanking the while at his hand, and his heart throbbing with emotion at the thought that at length he was to enter Rome.

At Puteoli they remained seven days, probably while Julius sent on his despatches to the capital, and waited for orders from head-quarters; and during this interval Paul had pleasant fellowship with the Christians whom he found there. Then setting forth for Rome, he went first along the Campanian road to Capua, and thence along the famous Appian Way until he came to Appii Forum. This was a town at the Roman extremity of the canal which had been formed across the Pontine marshes, and which ran almost parallel with the road, so that travellers had their choice whether to go by the ordinary vehicles or by the track-boat. We cannot tell how the apostle did; but it was at Appii Forum that the barge was left for the road by those who were going to the city, and the place was therefore very rough and disagreeable. Horace, in his humorous account of his journey to Brindusium, speaks of it as "crammed with bargemen and knavish innkeepers." So in itself it could have little interest for Paul; but it was then, and would be ever afterward, to him a spot of endearment, because there,

* Seneca, "Epis.," 77, quoted in Latin by both Lewin and Howson.

forty-three miles from their home, certain Christians had come from Rome to meet him. Nor was this all. At the next stage in his journey, at a place called the Three Taverns, ten miles nearer the city, he found others awaiting him, and the effect on his mind was of the most cheering description. We know not who these brethren were. Perhaps Aquila was there, and Epenetus, and Andronicus, and Amplias, and Urbane, and Stachys, and Apelles, and Herodion, his kinsmen, and others whose names are given in the chapter of Salutations to the Church at Rome. We cannot tell; but whoever they were, their names are in the Book of Life, and they will be remembered in the day when a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose its reward. For, indeed, as cold water to a thirsty soul, so were the salutations of these brethren to the apostle now. After many perils and long delays, he had set his foot on the Italian shore. Now at length he was to enter that city toward which for so many years his eyes had turned with earnest longing; but alas! he was to enter it as a prisoner, and he did not know in what light the brethren of the Roman Church might regard him when they beheld his chain. Hence we may not wonder if, human as he was, his heart was oppressed with suspense, and his spirit darkened by the shadow which seemed to overhang the future. But "God, that comforteth those who are cast down," comforted him by the coming of these brethren. The sight of them was to him almost as if Jesus himself had again appeared to him. The friendship of the disciples, valuable in itself, was doubly prized, as assuring him of the presence and the help of the Master. It was like the breaking of a rift in the cloud, through which sunshine came streaming down upon his head. The weight was lifted from his heart, the shadow was taken from his path; and, prisoner though he was, he went forward with a firmer step and with

a stronger trust. It was one of those times when a man feels himself standing as it were on some narrow isthmus, with the past on one side and the future on the other, and has fully before him all that both involve. Away behind him were those manifold experiences through which Christ had led him, from that eventful day when he was blinded by the heavenly light on the way to Damascus. His missionary journeys, his perils more recently at Ephesus and Jerusalem, his long imprisonment at Cæsarea, his voyage and shipwreck—all were vividly recalled to him by the coming of these friends, and were so irradiated by the sunshine which they brought that his heart brimmed over with gratitude and he "thanked God." Then before him lay the future—his entrance into Rome, his uncertainty as to the field which might open to him there, the possibility that his appeal might not be sustained, and that he might be condemned to die, the certain danger of the great enterprise in which he was engaged, and the probability that Nero might somehow cut short his career—all were set in array before him—yet such was the influence on him of the kindness of these friends, that the bitterness was taken out of them all; for it assured him that God was with him. So "he took courage," and said again, with perhaps stronger emphasis than before, "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Leaving the apostle to enjoy the Christian fellowship of these brethren, let us as usual glean a few lessons from the theme of our exposition.

See here, then, in the first place, how royally God repays kindness to his servants. Publius received Paul and his companions heartily, and lodged them courteously for three

days; and, as a return, his father was healed of a dangerous disease. The people of the island generally showed no little kindness to the shipwrecked voyagers, and so "others also which had diseases came and were healed." God never leaves unacknowledged the deeds of beneficence which are done to his people. If Rahab entertains the spies, her life and the lives of all her kinsmen are preserved amid the destruction of Jericho. If the "great woman" of Shunem prepares a table for Elisha, God lays a little one in her bosom, and when he is stricken down in death restores him to her arms. If the Master borrows Peter's boat to make it a temporary pulpit, he shows his appreciation of the favor by giving the large draught of fishes; and if he finds a home in the abode of Martha and Mary, he gives his reward in the resurrection of Lazarus. It would be mercenary in us to offer our gifts out of regard to these or similar returns; but it would be ungrateful in us when such returns are made not to recognize and acknowledge them. No man is ever a loser in the long-run by what he does for Christ and his servants. Everything we offer to him comes back to us in one form or another with added interest of blessing. If it do not come in the shape of temporal mercy, it will surely appear in richer measure of that grace by which the roots of our spiritual life are "mellowed and fed," and we are strengthened for the day that is upon us. Let us, therefore, always esteem it as a privilege when we are called to do anything for the Lord, or to receive a disciple in the name of a disciple; for when we do that we entertain not an angel only, but the Lord himself, since he hath said, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Mark, in the second place, how singularly God works out the purposes of his providence, and fulfils the desires of his servants. "So we went toward Rome." This was the accomplishment of a long-cherished design on the part of the apostle. From an early date in his ministry his heart had been set on visiting the imperial city. Three years before he set foot on the mole at Puteoli, when he was writing to the Romans from Corinth, he could say that "he had a great desire these many years to come unto him;" that "oftentimes he had purposed to visit them, and that the longing of his spirit had expressed itself in habitual prayer that he might have a prosperous journey unto them." It was not that he had a mere curiosity to look upon the great metropolis, or gaze upon the faces of its prominent men. But his ambition was that he might comfort and strengthen the little company of believers in Jesus who had established themselves there, and that through them and with them he might work upon that great centre of influence, so that at length the Word of Life might radiate from it in every direction. He knew that from the golden mile-stone in its Forum highways ran to the utmost borders of the empire on every side. He was aware that the statesmen in its senate were the men who as prætors and proconsuls would be sent out in course of years to guide the affairs of the most distant provinces. He had seen the soldiers of the Italian legions in the streets of Jerusalem; and he felt that he might meet at Rome men who might carry the seed of the Gospel with them to Britain on the west, or to Parthia on the east. So he desired to preach the Gospel there. This was the root of his longing to visit the imperial city. He sought nothing for himself, but he was eager to take the entire world for Christ; and as the nearest way to that he wished to establish himself in the metropolis.

And yet I scarcely think that when he formed that pur-

pose he imagined that he should go thither as a prisoner. But so it was. When he went at last he went in a situation which, humanly speaking, seemed to render it impossible to do anything very effective for the cause to which he had devoted his life. Strangely enough, however, as we shall see in our next lecture, he was constrained to say that his very bonds had fallen out to the furtherance of the Gospel; and by using his opportunity, such as it was, he introduced the leaven of the Gospel into the two least likely places in the city for its reception, namely, the palace of the Cæsars and the guard-room of the pretorian troops.

Now, there is much in all this to comfort and sustain us in our work for Christ. I may not say, indeed, that every purpose which we form is as sure of being carried out by us as this darling object of Paul's desire was realized by him. God has nowhere promised us anything of that kind; and if we are anxious for our own honor or our own advantage we shall very likely be disappointed. But if our longing is for usefulness, and if like our apostle we are always careful not to let our hope of doing great things in the future keep us from doing the little things which are possible in the present, I think that we may cherish the assurance that in the end he will give us our heart's desire. In this matter of usefulness God has encouraged us both to attempt great things and to expect great things. He has shown us the little grain of mustard-seed springing up into a tree, on whose branches the birds may sit and sing. He has let us see the leaven hid in the meal working its way out until the whole is leavened. And by his own miracle on the mountain-side he has prompted us to bring to him our few loaves and tiny fishes, that he may multiply them to the feeding of thousands. It may be long, indeed, before we reach the point at which we aim. Years may intervene between the formation of the purpose and its accomplishment; and

things may occur to imprison us and keep us from its attainment; but let us lose neither heart nor hope, and in the end God will be glorified by our success. As I muse on this subject I think of Wilberforce and Clarkson, laboring on in the face of obstacles of every sort till slavery was doomed. I think of Carey, waiting and working in the teeth of bitter opposition until he set his foot on India's "coral strand." I think of Henderson, toiling on through poverty and discouragement for years, until he became the very ideal of a medical missionary. Take heart, then, my brother: he who has put the purpose within you, and ripened it until it has become an habitual prayer, has given you therein the prophecy of your success. No matter what may be the Rome on which you have set your desire, if it be but to bless and benefit your fellows and to honor Christ, be sure that for you, too, there will come a day when you will be able to sympathize with Luke and Paul when they said, "So we went toward Rome."

But it may not come just as you expect it now. You may get something with it of which at first you had not dreamed, and that something will be of a kind to humble you, and send you back with absolute and entire dependence upon God. When you reach the goal you may find that in some way you are, like Paul, a prisoner. But if you make a right use of your bonds they will even increase your usefulness; for it is through such things that God fits us for doing service when we come to our proper sphere. Take them, then, not as discouragements but as preparatives. Carry them to God in prayer, and he will transmute them into the instruments of your after-power. They are, rightly improved, the forerunners of success, and not its foes. So when you come to your sphere and find yourself, like Paul, bound by some chain, do not be cast down. That also is part of the divine plan regarding you. Think not that the opportunity is

worth nothing because you come to it as a prisoner. The restraint itself, as you will by-and-by see, is a part of your opportunity; and if you use it rightly, God will make even your bonds turn out to the furtherance of his cause.

Finally, see how much a little kindness may do in the strengthening and encouragement of a good man. Was it not worth more than the forty miles' journey which these brethren took to be the means of so cheering the venerable apostle? And is there not much in the conduct of these Roman believers to instruct and benefit us? A kindly word spoken or a benevolent act done to a disciple will frequently inspirit and revive a timid and desponding heart; and nothing so tends to uplift the soul of the minister, or so gives him elasticity and energy for labor, as the manifestation by his people of interest in his work and attachment to himself. His sphere is pre-eminently that of affection; if he do not get his people's love, he gets nothing that is worth possessing; but every indication which they give of kind consideration for his welfare, gilds for him the past with glory, and fills the future with hope. The weariness falls off his spirit, his labor becomes less a work and more a joy, because the love of his people is to him the foretaste and earnest of his Master's affection, in that coming day, when he shall hear those words which shall overpay him for all his efforts: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It was a little thing these believers did, when looked at from their point of view; but it was a great thing to Paul, and a great thing also to Paul's Lord. Oh, how much sunshine we might throw around us! how many souls we might fill with gratitude! how many hearts we might tone up to courage by little attentions! They are so little that we think them scarcely worth bestowing; yet the sunshine is composed of single rays, and the rain falls out in single drops, and what a mighty result

does their amalgamation produce! Be ye, therefore, "kindly affectioned one toward another;" come out of your reserve; salute each other with the cordial greeting of Christian brotherhood; show kindness; go about doing good. It may be that your love shall be to some devoted Christian what the meeting of these believers was to Paul; and you may hear of it again when the Master says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

XXVI.

ROME.

Acts xxviii., 15-31.

I ATTEMPT no description of the panorama which lay before the eyes of Paul when first he looked on Rome. It may be well, however, to set a few things distinctly before you, in order that you may be the better able to understand the surroundings in the midst of which the apostle found himself during his first residence as a prisoner under the shadow of the imperial palace.

At this date—the spring of the year A.D. 61—Rome was very much as it had been left by Augustus; for the fire, which during the reign of Nero furnished the opportunity for reconstructing the city, had not yet occurred. It had long outgrown its mural limits, and must be conceived of as a huge, irregular agglomeration of buildings which covered an immense area, having a circuit of twelve miles. One could hardly tell, as he journeyed toward it, where the country ended and the city began. From a distance its appearance was not very imposing; for there was little either in its site or in its edifices to call forth admiration. We read much, indeed, about its seven hills, but these were neither lofty nor attractive at first; and when covered, as they ultimately were, with streets, they would be as little thought of as the hills of London, concerning which it may be said that, but for the names which the localities bear, one would scarcely recognize that there was any elevation about them. Then, as to the buildings—though it must be admitted that

there were among the temples some splendid specimens of architecture—it must not be forgotten that, as Howson has said, "there was neither dome nor campanile," and there was an entire absence of "those spires which give life to all the landscapes of Northern Christendom."* There were throughout the city many open spaces, like the Forum; and the Campus Martius—a beautiful plain stretching along the bank of the Tiber, and now forming a part of the site of the modern city—was then just beginning to be fringed with the villas of the more wealthy citizens. But the streets generally were narrow and winding, and were frequently lined on both sides by densely-crowded lodging-houses (called insulæ), which rose to a great height, and may be compared to our own lofty tenement-houses, or those many-storied "lands" which make so remarkable a feature in the old town of Edinburgh. The population at this date has been variously estimated by historians, but may be safely put in the neighborhood of a million and a half. Of these perhaps one-half were slaves; and of the remainder the larger proportion was composed of "pauper citizens, supported in idleness by the miserable system of public gratuities."† There seems to have been no middle class composed of free, industrious artisans. All the trades were given over to the slaves, and there was a comparatively small body of wealthy patricians, whose luxury and profligacy have been held up to scorn by the satirists of their own generation. The rest of the people "hung around" as loafers, waiting now for the bread of public charity, and now for the games which were provided for them at the national expense.‡

The emperor was Nero, now twenty-four years of age,

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* Vol. ii., p. 371. † Smith's "Dictionary," *sub voce*, ROME.

‡ "Panem et Circenses."

and just beginning that course of madness and cruelty which has made posterity alternately laugh at him as a fool and abhor him as a tyrant. His name originally was Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, and he was the son of Domitius Ahenobarbus and Agrippina. On the marriage of his mother to the Emperor Claudius, he was adopted by that monarch, and his name was changed to Nero Claudius Cæsar Drusus Germanicus. He was educated somewhat carefully by the philosopher Seneca; and when Claudius was poisoned by Agrippina, she managed at the same time to secure the throne for her son, whose first care was to get rid by poison of Germanicus, the son of Claudius, and so put out of the way the rival who might dispute his right to the purple. For a few years he managed affairs with some discretion, under the advice of his tutor Seneca and his prefect Burrus; but in the year 59 he contrived the murder of his mother Agrippina, and from that time forward the record of his reign consists mainly of a catalogue of follies, cruelties, and vices. After divorcing and putting to death Octavia, his wife, he formed an alliance with the worthless Poppæa, a vile woman, who tried to hide her enormities under a veil of piety, which took the form of proselytism to the Jewish faith. Burrus, his faithful servant, died broken-hearted; Seneca, disgusted with the licentiousness of the court, quitted the capital; and then, unrestrained by any wholesome advisers, the emperor went from bad to worse, until his name became a synonym for all that is debasing and unnatural. He is a fearful illustration of that ruin which must inevitably ensue when a man without moral principle is placed in an irresponsible position, and has command of all the resources of luxury and wealth and power. The superficial accomplishments of life had in his estimation taken the place of the more important things of character and morals. He was more ambitious to excel in

driving a chariot, or to obtain the applause of the frequenters of the theatre for playing on a guitar, or singing a song, than he was to study the welfare of the people, or provide for the good government of his subjects. He could criticise music, painting, and sculpture with the skill of a connoisseur, and could quote largely, appreciatively, and appropriately from the poets. Even in the last hours of his life, as one has said, "his reflections were like a continuous discharge of classical quotations, mixed with heavy pleasantries; for every circumstance he had some apt literary reminiscence, some unmeaning antithesis."* He frequented the studios of his time, and got up the art cant of his day; yet so little did this culture tend to produce in him the "sweetness and light" which a modern author assures us are its constant fruits, that he did not scruple to commit the most heinous crimes, and positively revelled in the perpetration of the most abominable cruelties, and in the indulgence of the most degrading passions. To serve him with a fidelity which preferred his interests to his inclinations was the sure way to incur his vengeance; and when it suited his purpose and tended to divert suspicion from himself, he did not hesitate to accuse the inoffensive Christians of having set Rome on fire. Nor did he consider it improper to cover over their bodies with pitch and set them up in blazing rows along the walks of his gardens for the amusement of the multitude.

Such then was the city at which, after the longing of years, Paul had arrived; and such was the emperor before whom he had been sent to prosecute his appeal. As he approached the metropolis by the Appian Way, lined with sepulchres on either side, he would enter by the Porta Ca-

* Renan's "Antichrist," p. 309, quoted in *Edinburgh Review* for October, 1874.

pena, at the foot of the Cœlian Hill, and pass below the arch which was always dripping with water percolating from the aqueduct which passed over it. Thence his road lay between the Cœlian Mount on the right and the Palatine on the left, over the site now occupied by the Arch of Titus, and down the Via Sacra, until he reached the golden milestone at the head of the Forum. On the left rose the imperial palace, and close to that was the barrack of the pretorian guard, where Julius probably delivered up his prisoners to the prefect, to wait their trial before the emperor.* The prefect into whose hands Paul was given is generally identified with Burrus, to whom I have already referred; but whoever he was, he treated the apostle with great leniency. Either from the account which Festus had given in the official papers—if these had not been lost in the shipwreck—or from the good report given by the centurion who had been with him every day for months, the mind of the prefect seems to have been favorable to Paul, for he allowed him to dwell by himself, on the simple condition that he should always be chained to one of the pretorian guards. At first he took up his abode in a lodging; but latterly, when it became apparent that his cause was to be delayed, he hired a house for himself, where he was permitted to receive all that came unto him.

The earliest use which Paul made of this indulgence was to seek an interview with the chief men of the Jews at Rome. And here let me say in a parenthesis that there had been for many years a Jewish colony in the metropolis, occupying a particular quarter on the opposite bank of the Tiber to that which was covered by the main portion of the city. As early as the year B.C. 63, after the conquest of Palestine by Pompey, several thousands of Jews had been sold as slaves

* See Fairbairn's "Imperial Bible Dictionary," *sub voce*, ROME.

in the markets of Rome; but, with that indomitable energy which has always characterized the children of Abraham in foreign lands, they had speedily risen to stations of influence and trust. Meanwhile, others of the same nationality, drawn by the magnet of business, had gone to Rome of their own accord, and plied their trades with industry and success. The Jewish portion of the population thus consisted of two classes—namely, slaves, retainers, or clients of the patrician households; and artisans or tradesmen, who lived in their own quarter, on the other side of the Tiber. For some reason or other, Julius Cæsar showed them what was, for him, unusual kindness. Augustus, following in his great kinsman's footsteps, allowed them the free exercise of their religion, and permitted them to take their share with the citizens in the largesses of corn, for which, if the distribution happened to be made on their Sabbath, they might come on the following day. But, in spite of these favors, they were regarded as a turbulent and dangerous element of the population; for Tiberius in the early part of his reign banished a large number of them from the city, though in his later days he treated them more leniently. Claudius also, as we have seen, banished them all from Italy on account of disputes among them regarding the Messiah; but that decree could not have been long in force, since Aquila and Priscilla, who had gone to Asia in consequence of it, are found in Rome again at a date three years before the arrival of Paul. We need not be surprised, therefore, at finding the Jews again a numerous and prosperous community there.

For the chief men of this section of the population, then —that is, as I judge, for the rulers and elders of their synagogues—Paul sent, that he might inform them of the position in which he stood, and disabuse them of any prejudices which they might have concerning him. He told them that he had come to Rome in consequence of his having ap-

pealed to the emperor, but he wished them to understand that he had taken that step simply as a matter of self-defence, and not because he had brought any accusation against his nation or its rulers. He was not seeking the punishment of any one, but only using the last resource which was left him to save himself from injustice or violence. He could assure them that he had done nothing against his people or the customs of their religion; and that the Roman governors by whom he had been examined found nothing worthy of death in him. The truth was that the Jews spake against him so that, in order to preserve himself from their enmity, he was constrained to appeal to the emperor; and the reason why his countrymen were so bitter against him was, that he had allied himself to those who believed that the hope of Israel centred in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah promised to the fathers.

To this they replied with great courtesy, but with still greater caution. They affirmed that they had neither received letters out of Judæa concerning him, nor had any of their brethren who had come from Palestine shown or spoken any harm of him. And there is no reason to suppose that in speaking thus they were dealing either in falsehood or in prevarication. They might have heard of Paul's doings in other places; but of the things to which he had specially referred they had received no intelligence; for, up to the very moment of his appearance before Festus, there had been no probability that the apostle's case would go farther than the provincial court, and no Jew would think it worth while to make allusion to him in writing to Rome. Then, after he had taken his appeal, he had been sent so speedily to Italy that no one could have anticipated his arrival there, either by letter or by personal travel. The ship in which he had come to Puteoli was among the first, if not the first of the season; and that in which he had left Cæs-

area was among the last, if not the last of the preceding season; so that the earliest news of his case would come with himself.

They added to their assertion the expression of their desire to hear what he had to say upon the subject of Jesus; for, as concerning the sect of his disciples, they knew that it was everywhere spoken against. We cannot but mark the prudence of these men. They will not, for the moment, commit themselves to anything. They had not forgotten the edict of Claudius, and they did not wish to provoke another of the same sort from Nero. Moreover, they had heard Paul say that the Roman governor had pronounced him guiltless. They saw, too, that he was treated with great favor as a prisoner; and so they judged it safer to say as little as they could. Still they were willing, nay, desirous, to give him a hearing. Therefore, he appointed a day on which many came to him, and to them he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus both out of the law and out of the prophets. The conference lasted "from morning until evening;" and the result was that some believed and some believed not the things which were spoken. Thus they went away "not agreed among themselves;" but not before Paul had reminded them, in the words of Isaiah, of the hardening influence of resisting the proclamation of the truth, and had intimated that, having now discharged his obligations unto them, he would preach the Gospel unto the Gentiles, and they would hear it gladly.

After this Paul remained for two years in Rome, waiting for the emperor's decision in his case, which had been delayed either by the non-arrival of some necessary witnesses, or by the dilatoriness for which in matters of public business Nero was proverbial. But though he was under restraint, the apostle was not idle; for his home became a centre from

which influences went out which carried blessing and guidance to the churches of the Gentiles of his own day, and which are yet working for good wherever the New Testament is read. The beloved physician Luke has carried his history no farther, his design evidently being to bring up his narrative to that point at which, in the person of its chiefest apostle, the power of God in the Gospel was brought into contact with the power of the world in its strongest seat. But from the letters to Philemon, the Colossians, the Ephesians, and the Philippians, which were written during Paul's residence in Rome at this time, we may glean many interesting particulars which may help to set before us the work in which he was engaged, and the friends by whom he was surrounded.

In one of these* he tells us that his imprisonment "had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that his bonds in Christ were manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." Now, as Dr. Lightfoot has, I think, conclusively shown that the term here translated "palace"† is a collective noun denoting the whole body of the pretorian guards, rather than any locality, we have thereby a flood of light thrown upon the kind of influence by which the effect described was produced. From that regiment the companies were drafted off, whose individual members took each his turn in guarding the apostle. In this way as the months rolled round a goodly number of the soldiers would be brought into direct contact with him, and he would lead them by his earnest conversations up to that Gospel with which he was so identified. Moreover they had opportunities of learning his doctrines and observing his life such as

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* Phil. i., 12, 13.

† In the original, *πραιτώριῳ*. See "Lightfoot on the Philippians," pp. 97–102.

none others ever enjoyed. They heard his familiar talks with the friends who frequented his abode; they listened while he dictated, sometimes with tears, those letters which are so remarkable for the combination of the richest doctrinal statements with the wisest practical exhortations; and, after all others had withdrawn from him, the soldier at the other end of his chain would be a witness of those fervent prayers to which he has so frequently referred in his epistles. All this would awaken remark in the guard-room of the barrack; then it would stimulate curiosity and bring others to examine and verify the reports they heard; and then it would produce in many hearts the conviction that he was speaking truth, and so lead them to the Lord. Nor can we well over-estimate the value of such a result as a factor in the evangelization of the Roman Empire. These soldiers were always in communication with distant places; they were liable to be sent on important missions to far-away provinces, and, converted themselves, they would become in the most natural way missionaries of the Gospel of Christ wherever they went. This was the putting of the leaven into the meal; and when, more than a century later, Tertullian made his famous defence, in which he refers to the number of Christians in the army, we see how effectively it wrought.

But the presence of Paul at Rome, even though he was a prisoner, was valuable in another way, for he says: "Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good-will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein

do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."* Now, to understand the meaning of these verses we must remember that in the church at Rome, as in the other Gentile churches, there were two parties. Its origin had been, most probably, in the conversion on the Day of Pentecost of those "strangers of Rome, Jews, and proselytes," who are mentioned in the second chapter of The Acts of the Apostles. Naturally, therefore, these persons would retain their Jewish predilections and prejudices, and would be grieved at the reports which from time to time they heard of Paul's doings in the cities of the East. But, in process of time, to the company of Jews and proselytes who had first embraced the Gospel would be added others who, like Aquila and Priscilla, and those mentioned in the salutations in the sixteenth chapter of The Romans, were thoroughly in sympathy with the teachings of our apostle. Thus there were here also the Judaistic and the liberal elements; and no one can read the Epistle to the Romans without feeling that the numerical majority was on the Judaistic side. I think, too, that his knowledge of that fact had something to do with causing Paul's anxiety when he landed at Puteoli; even as it was the appearance of some of the members of the church at Appii Forum that dispelled his gloom. But though on his first appearance the disaffection of the Jewish party in the church toward him might not assert itself, it would be sure to come out afterward; and there seems to me to be an indication that it did, in these words to the Colossians:† "Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me." We are obliged to infer from this statement that, though

* Phil. i., 14–18. † Col. iv., 10, 11.

there were some of the circumcision party — Jesus Justus and Mark, to wit—who were a comfort to him, working in harmony with him, and loyally carrying out the principles on which the compromise of the Jerusalem council had been constructed, all the rest of that Judaistic wing were moved with envy toward him, and had been anything but a comfort to him. They were stirred up by the spirit of contention to preach Christ in their own limited fashion, in order that they might, if possible, aggravate his sufferings. But they did not know Paul. He could distinguish between things that differed. In that great heathen city the question raised by their preaching was not what it had been when they carried their doctrines into churches already formed under his ministry. In the latter case the choice was between the bondage of ritualism and the liberty of the Gospel; but in the former it was between an imperfect presentation of the Gospel to the heathen and no presentation of it at all; and so, as Christ was preached, however unworthily, both in manner and in motive, he rejoiced.

But the friends of Paul were stimulated by his presence, even more than were his enemies. They saw how lenient, on the whole, his imprisonment was; and so their dread of the consequences of preaching openly the Gospel was lessened, while the example of the apostle himself was, if I may so express it, wholesomely contagious; for as they saw his meekness, patience, and activity, they caught somewhat of his spirit. Thus they "waxed confident" by his bonds.

The influence of Paul's residence in Rome was felt even in the imperial household; for in his letter to the Philippians he says, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."* It is not improbable that there were in the palace some slaves or freedmen who had,

* Phil. iv., 22.

before his coming, been converted to the faith, and they would come like others under the inspiration of his presence, and be quickened thereby to new earnestness. We have very slender materials supplied by secular historians wherewith to illustrate this branch of the apostle's work. Some, indeed, from what appear to me to be very slight materials, have attempted to prove that the noble Roman lady Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Aulus Plautius, who conquered Britain, was a convert to Christianity. She was tried by her husband in A.D. 57 or 58, before Paul reached the city, for "foreign superstition;" but there is no evidence to show that the "superstition" describes the Gospel of Christ; and in any case she could not have been one of Paul's spiritual children. A similar attempt to identify the Pudens and Claudia in Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy with persons of distinction in the city, rests upon suppositions rather than well-attested facts. But however it may have been at the time, the effect of Paul's labors showed itself in the next generation in certain members of the imperial family itself; for Flavius Clemens and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, both cousins of the Emperor Domitian, were accused of atheism and Jewish manners, and condemned by the emperor. Even Gibbon admits that this singular association of ideas which involved disbelief in the prevalent idolatry, combined with the practice of a pure morality, cannot be with any propriety applied except to the Christians; and so we may perhaps conclude that they were numbered among the noble army of martyrs to the Gospel. But for the rest we may say with Merivale that "over Paul's intercourse with 'those of Cæsar's household' a cloud rests which we can never hope to penetrate."*

* "St. Paul at Rome," by the Rev. Charles Merivale, D.D., Dean of Ely, p. 115.

We are on safer ground, by far, when we complete our delineation of the apostle at this time by placing him in the midst of the friends who made his house their common place of resort. Foremost among these was Luke, the companion of his voyage, and the devoted medical attendant, who gave up the gains of his profession that he might wait on the apostle and become the chronicler of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord, and of the early history of the Church under the ministry of the Spirit. Next was Aristarchus of Thessalonica, who had also been a fellow-passenger with him from Cæsarea, and who, some years earlier, had risked his life with him at Ephesus. Next was Timothy, his well-beloved son in the faith, who, if we may judge from the presence of his name in the opening salutations of three out of the four letters which were written at this time, seems to have been with Paul for a portion at least of these two years. Tychicus was there for a time from Ephesus; Epaphroditus from Philippi; Epaphras from Colosse. There, also, were those two with histories so singularly similar in one particular—Demas and Mark. Let us hope that before the death of the former the resemblance was completed, and that he too returned to his first love with more earnest consecration than before. To these we must add Jesus Justus, one of the circumcision, who as we have seen was a comfort to Paul; and Onesimus, the runaway slave whom the apostle had begotten in his bonds, and whom he was soon to send to his former master, not now as a slave but as a brother beloved. I wonder that no Christian artist has tried to put upon the canvas some delineation of Paul surrounded by these companions, and chained to "the soldier that kept him." It would make a most remarkable group. I have seen paintings of warriors with their generals; of presidents and prime-ministers with their cabinets; and of authors with their literary friends. But what were the greatest of these

in comparison with those who used to meet thus in the hired house of the apostle on the Palatine Hill? In this little group we have three of the writers of the New Testament, who were the human instruments of giving us at least two-thirds of its contents. Behold the irony of history! The words of the Roman literati of that era are mostly lost, and those that remain are known and read by but a few scholars; whereas the writings of these men, who were sneered at by Tacitus as the votaries of a "wretched superstition," are enthroned in the hearts of myriads.

But we are not to suppose that these friends were there merely to cheer and comfort Paul by their fellowship. They did that, but they did far more than that; for they were there principally that they might consult him on matters pertaining to the welfare of the churches, and that they might furnish him with the means of communicating with the churches. Some of them were what we may call the letter-carriers of the apostle. Onesimus was the bearer of the Epistle to Philemon; Epaphroditus carried that which was addressed to the Philippians; and Tychicus was the messenger to the Colossians and Ephesians. There were probably other epistles written then, of which now we have no trace; but even if these were all, they show us that Paul was still, though chained, the centre of a large system of effort, from which, like the life-blood from the heart, pulsations of strength and wisdom went out to the remotest churches of the Gentiles.

The circumstances in connection with which these letters were written may be so fully learned from the statements which they contain, and the principles which they enforce have such abiding importance, that we shall be well repaid if we endeavor to find out the history of their production and to give an analysis of their contents. For these studies, however, another lecture will be required. Meanwhile, let

us take with us something of present, practical assistance suggested by the narrative on which we have been engaged.

We are reminded, then, in the first place, that each of us has his own chain.* I said last Lord's-day evening that, very commonly when we reach the goal on which we had set our hearts, we get with it something that seems, at first sight, to fetter us in its enjoyment or improvement. But now I generalize the statement and affirm that each has his own bonds. There is not one of us who does not feel himself fettered somewhere or somehow; so that he cannot quite accomplish all that he desires to do. Continually we discover that the accomplishment of our purposes is prevented by the fact that we cannot pass beyond the limit of our chain. "We could have done so much better, or so much more," so we often say, "if some unavoidable or hampering influence had not hindered us." Thus we are each carrying about a chain, of which, so long as we are working within its limits, we may be largely unconscious, but which brings us to a stand the moment we have gone to its farthest extent. The business man, if he is to serve God in his daily pursuits, must look after them; and so he is bound to his counting-house by a cord which neither his God nor his conscience will allow him to break. The professional man is hemmed in by his engagements as really as the prisoner is by the walls of his dungeon—with this difference, that in the latter case the restraints are external and physical, while in the former they are internal and spiritual. The invalid is held down to her couch as truly by weakness as the galley-slave was fixed to his seat by his chains; and her devoted nurse is kept continually at her bedside by a bond which is not the less real because it is invisible, or

* Several paragraphs in this discourse have already appeared in the volume entitled "The Limitations of Life, and other Sermons."

the less powerful because its strands are made of love. The mother is for the most part bound to her home, so that wherever she goes she feels tugging at her heart the silken string that ties her to the cradle and its inmate. The minister is held to his pulpit and its immediate sphere. The poor man is hampered by his poverty, and he who is the servant of another has his service of God in some sort conditioned and qualified by the duties which he owes to his earthly master. Thus every man, like Paul, has his chain.

But that we may not be discouraged by that, let us remember, in the second place, that such a chain is no disgrace to us. Paul was not a prisoner because of any evil he had done. Rather his chain was put upon him because he would neither do what was wrong nor suffer others to inflict injustice upon him. His chain was a trophy of principle; and though others might be ashamed of his bonds, he never hung his head on their account. Now, it is quite similar with those Providential limitations of our service of God and of our generation to which I have compared Paul's chain. There is no disgrace in poverty or in sickness, provided only we have not brought it upon ourselves by our sin. The business man has no need to be ashamed of his attention to his counting-house; nay, rather, the shame and sin would be if through neglect he should let himself drift into ruin. The mother cannot think that she is disgraced by the little ones that fill the nursery with their glee and take so much of her care. Disgraced! nay, rather she is highly favored among women; for is it not written, "Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord?" And if there be anywhere the human likeness of that angel who ministered to our Lord in his Gethsemane anguish, it is to be found in the devoted nurse who tends the fevered sufferer through his midnight tossings. Let us not make misery for ourselves, therefore, by imagining that these chains of ours are

things for which we ourselves are to be blamed. They have come in the providence of God. They have been put upon us because we have refused to desert the post of present and immediate duty; and though they may seem to keep us from doing all that we should wish to accomplish for the Lord, we need not blush because of them.

Moreover, finally, we may take comfort in the thought here suggested to us, that these chains need not really prevent our usefulness. I doubt not—for Paul was very human—that he was sometimes saddened by the thought that his long imprisonment had kept him from that missionary work on which his heart was set; yet, as we have seen, by the quiet persistence of his efforts with those who came within the range of his chain, he succeeded in doing a great missionary work among the soldiers; while in the epistles to which I have referred he is even now preaching to Christians everywhere. Thus he was laid aside from his usual work for a time, in order that through these letters he might work for all time. How much the business man might accomplish for the Lord, if he were only to do with those who are brought into immediate contact with him what Paul did with his military guards! And is there anywhere on earth a sanctuary so blessed as the sick-chamber, in which the pulpit is a couch of suffering, and the preacher is a patient, loving, gentle one, who tries to bear all for the sake of Christ? It may seem a great hardship to the mother that she is kept by family cares from joining in the work which used to be her joy; but let her wait awhile until that bright-eyed boy at her knee has grown up to be a godly man, it may be to become an earnest minister, and then she will have the satisfaction of knowing that her influence is telling through him on all whom he benefits. The minister is chained to his pulpit, and when he reads the stirring story of some noble man who has quickened thousands by

his words, he is apt to think, "Alas! I am but a poor prisoner here; it is little that I can do for my Lord;" but there happens to be in his congregation for the day—men would say by accident; I prefer to say in the providence of God—a youth who is going out West to begin life for himself; a man of business, just about to set sail for a heathen city in the far East; and perhaps, also, a missionary soon to return to his work among the sons of Africa. The preacher, all unconscious of their presence, seeks to do his best for the souls of his hearers, and some word falls into each of these three hearts, so that each goes forth with new inspiration to labor for the Lord. By-and-by a Young Men's Christian Association springs up in the new settlement in the West; a demand comes for Bibles from the heathen city; and tidings of a revival of religion are wafted home from the mission station within the tropics; and as the minister hears of these things traced by each of these workers to his words—where now is the imprisonment? and of how little consequence is now the chain! We do not know—and it is well for us that we do not know—how far-reaching are our deeds and words. If we did, pride would soon take the place of humility, and that would unfit us for our work. So God keeps us down to keep us useful; but among the many pleasant surprises which he has reserved for us when we enter heaven will be the discovery, that efforts put forth by us, and which we supposed to be restricted to a very limited area, have been, under God, the germs from which rich harvests of blessing have been reaped by multitudes whom we have never seen till then. Do not, therefore, undervalue your position, but use it, bonds and all, for Christ. We may be in bonds, but Christ is free; and the little which we put into his hands may find its way, through him, to those from whom we are kept by the hampering limitations of our earthly lot.

XXVII.

THE EPISTLES OF THE IMPRISONMENT.

AN examination of the salutations and personal allusions in the Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, the Ephesians, and the Philippians* leads us to conclude that they were all written about the same date; while the references made in all of them to his "bonds" render it absolutely certain that their author was, at the time, a prisoner.† They must have been sent, therefore, either from Cæsarea, where Paul was kept for two years by Felix, or from Rome, where he was held under Nero for a similar term, and where Luke leaves him, as he closes his narrative of The Acts of the Apostles. Up till a very recent date the all but unanimous verdict of scholars was given in favor of the opinion that they were transmitted from Rome; but latterly certain German critics‡ have advanced some arguments, more ingenious and elaborate than convincing, in support of the view that they were written at Cæsarea. To me, however, these reasonings are outweighed by the mention of "Cæsar's household" in the letter to the Philippians, since that phrase cannot by any stretch of exegesis be made to designate any establishment, however important, in a Palestinian city. Therefore, without the slightest misgiving, I rest in the generally received opinion, believing that it not only

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* Eph. vi., 21, 22; Col. iv., 7–9; Col. iv., 10–14; Philem. 9, 23, 24.

† Eph. iii., 1; iv., 1; vi., 20; Phil. i., 7, 13, 14, 16; Col. iv., 3, 18.

‡ Meyer, Schenkel, and Schultz may be named.

harmonizes with all the details which the letters contain, but also throws a clearer light on the drift and purpose of the letters themselves.

Of these four epistles the earliest* appears to have been that to the members of the church at Colosse, which was a city of Phrygia, on the river Lycus, and was famous for its woollen manufactures and the skill to which its merchants had attained in the art of dyeing. The fact that this letter was addressed to the Christians there, is evidence that a church existed, as early as the year A.D. 61, in that city; but we have no information that enables us to tell when or by whom it was founded. Mention is made in The Acts of the Apostles of two journeys taken by Paul through Phrygia; the first† to introduce the Gospel into that region, and the second‡ to confirm those who, on the former occasion, had become disciples; but in neither case is there any allusion to Colosse. Indeed, from an expression in the letter itself§ it is all but certain that the Colossian Christians had not, up till that date, seen Paul's face in the flesh, and so we cannot speak of him as having been personally the founder of their church. But there is no reason to doubt that it sprung indirectly out of his labors. During his three years' residence in Ephesus he must have been brought into contact with visitors from various cities in Asia, and it is possible that through them the Gospel was introduced into their several places of abode; or the members of the church of Ephesus may have sent agents out to these important centres charged with the duty of preaching the Gospel to their inhabitants.

The same messenger who took the letter to the Colos-

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* But it is not certain which of the two—Colossians or Ephesians—was first composed.

† Acts xvi., 6. ‡ Acts xviii., 23. § Col. ii., 1.

sians was the bearer of that to the Ephesians;* and in the Epistle to the Colossians there is tender allusion to the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis.† There must, therefore, have been a very close communion between the Christians of these four cities, and that gives ground for the belief that the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were the daughters of that at Ephesus. If that were indeed the case, they would be very dear to Paul; and as he would be constantly referred to by their instructors, they would naturally apply to him for direction in all matters of difficulty or disputation. In this way it is easy to account for the facts that Epaphras described to the apostle the state of things in Colosse, and that, in consequence of his having received such an account concerning them, Paul wrote the letter which is now associated with the name of the Christians of that city. Whether Epaphras had been deputed to the apostle by the Church, or merely took advantage of his providential meeting with him at Rome for the purpose of consulting him, does not clearly appear. In his letter to Philemon, Paul calls him his "fellow-prisoner;"‡ but that may mean only that he was a voluntary sharer with him of the restraint under which he was held by his chain. It is possible, however, that he was sent to Rome from Colosse, just as Paul had been sent from Cæsarea, and that he availed himself of the opportunity of reporting to Paul the critical condition of the church of which he was the "faithful minister."

So far as we can infer from the contents of the epistle, three tendencies had developed themselves among the members of the Colossian church, namely, first, toward a vain philosophy which affected special acquaintance with spirit-

* Col. iv., 7; Eph. vi., 21, 22.
† Col. ii., 1; iv., 13, 16.
‡ Philem. 23.

ual things, and indulged in useless and unwarrantable speculations regarding angels; second, toward the observance, as of prime importance, of Jewish ordinances "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days;" and third, toward the practices of an asceticism which, as Paul affirmed, had "a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor."* These tendencies were apparently connected with the labors among them of one man,† who was probably an Alexandrian Jew, combining in himself a regard for the customs of the law or Moses, with a belief in that element of Oriental philosophy which regarded matter as essentially evil, and which recommended ascetic practices as the necessary means for emancipating the soul from the slavery of the flesh.

To meet these evils Paul, guided by the inspiring Spirit, sets himself in his epistle, and it is at once interesting and instructive to observe how he repels them all by dwelling on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He confronts the darkness with the light, and thereby he most effectually dispels it. He reminds those who were continually boasting of the fulness of their knowledge that "it had pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell." He removes all pretext for the worship of angels by insisting on the pre-eminence of Him "who is before all things and by whom all things consist." And he vindicates the liberty of Christian disciples by enlarging on the perfection of the work of Christ on their behalf, and by reminding them that they were "complete in him." Like the letter to the Galatians, this to the Colossians was evoked by a special occasion; and though there is less of vehement indignation and affectionate appeal in it, he carries here

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* Col. ii., 8, 16, 23.

† Col. ii., 8, 18.

also his readers to the central cross, and makes that the test of every opinion and practice. He did not waste his strength by entering upon a lengthened and minute argument against every individual error; but he contented himself with setting forth positively the pre-eminence of Christ's personal dignity, the perfection of his work, and the fulness of that salvation which he has wrought out for all who choose to accept of it by faith. The one figure which stands out in bold relief in this epistle is that of Christ. The absorbing ambition of its author is to preserve intact for him that exclusive supremacy which of right belongs to him, and to vindicate the liberty which he has conferred upon his believing people. Paradoxical as it may seem, these two things always go together. Where Christ is owned as the sole sovereign, there his service is perfect freedom; but where his supremacy is either ignored or given to another, there comes the slavery of superstition, or the tyranny of priestcraft, or the cold domination of philosophy, and it is hard to say which of these is the most degrading. The same tendencies as existed and operated in Colosse are working among us to-day. Let us learn how to meet them from the study of this noble letter, and instead of fighting philosophy with philosophy, or science, falsely so-called, by other science, let us be only the more diligent in the full and positive presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus. Let us exalt him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," because "in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and then before him all error will disappear even as the mists of the morning are scattered by the rising sun.

Along with Tychicus, who carried this letter to the Colossians, there went Onesimus, who was the bearer of an epistle to Philemon, one of the members of the same church. His story is thrilling in its interest; and the letter which he

carried, though the shortest of those generally ascribed to Paul, is one of the most remarkable of them all. In the household of Philemon at Colosse, Onesimus was originally a slave; but, yielding to some pressing temptation, or coming under some evil influence, he stole some of his master's property and ran away from bondage. It was no easy matter, then, to elude the vigilance of those who were always on the outlook for making gain by the restoration of slaves to their owners; but, with that criminal instinct which impels a fugitive to seek his securest hiding-place in the largest city, he went to Rome. There it is likely that he became the associate of the lowest of the inhabitants, and as he lounged about the streets of the metropolis he was probably met and recognized by Epaphras, through whose instrumentality he may have been brought to Paul. This seems to me to be the most natural explanation of the manner in which they came together; but, in whatever way, Onesimus did come into contact with Paul, and was by him led to the Lord Jesus Christ; so that he became a humble and docile disciple. The singular history of the man perhaps led the apostle to take more than common interest in his welfare, and under his instructions he developed so rapidly, both intellectually, and spiritually, that Paul actually cherished the idea of keeping him beside himself as an assistant in his work. But the nature of the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon, taken in connection, on the one hand, with the jealousy with which the Roman law guarded the property claimed by a master in his slave, and, on the other, with the personal friendship existing between Philemon and himself, determined Paul to take a different course. He sent Onesimus back to Philemon; and with him transmitted the epistle with which we are all so familiar, and in which he pleads for the reception of the runaway, "not now as a slave but as a brother beloved," and engages

to make good, out of his own resources, any loss which had been caused by the dishonesty of the fugitive. Every reader of this brief note—for it is little more—must be struck with the writer's piety, in that, while using the common forms of correspondence then customary among men, he pours into them the new fervor of Christian love; his courtesy, in that while making delicate allusion to the spiritual attainments of Philemon, he asks from him, as a gift of love, a favor to his old age, and a concession to his "bonds," that which he might well enough have enjoined as a duty; his consummate tact, in that after having presented his petition he proceeds upon the assumption that it is already granted, and dwells upon the change in the character of Onesimus, while before he concludes he, as it were, invites himself to be a guest in the home of his friend, when, as he hopes soon to do, he shall visit Colosse; his sterling honesty, in that while promising to refund the loss which Onesimus had occasioned, he gives evidence of his sincerity, and leaves no room for doubt as to his intention, by taking the pen from his amanuensis and inscribing these words: "I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it;" his humor, in that, playing on the meaning of the word Onesimus, which signifies profitable, he says—and I think I can see the twinkle in his eye as he looked at Onesimus while he dictated the clause—"Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me;" and finally, his far-seeing wisdom, in that while sending a fugitive slave back to his master he does so in such a dignified and manly spirit, and with such an assertion of the rights of Christian brotherhood, as cut at the root of all slavery and introduced the leaven of emancipation into the Roman Empire. It is a wonderful letter, showing how greatness can dignify a common subject, how holiness can consecrate a matter of business, and how Christian statesmanship can make an appar-

ently trivial thing the occasion for the utterance of principles of perennial importance and enduring influence.

There are yet existing two letters from that fascinating correspondent, the younger Pliny, to his friend Sabinianus, the one entreating pardon for a freedman who had offended him, and the other acknowledging gratefully the granting of the request. They are thus contrasted, by so candid a critic as the late Dean Alford, with Paul's Epistle to Philemon: "The letters are models of courtesy, humanity, good-feeling. But to a Christian mind the comparison with this of Paul is most instructive. They lack just that in which this is eminent. Pliny conjures his friend by motives of pity, of self-respect, even of self-indulgence; for, says he, anger must be a torment to a man of your disposition. Nay, he puts another motive still: if you spare him now, you will have more excuse for anger with him in case he offends hereafter. Paul writes to his friend far otherwise. There is no mere appeal to pity, no mirror held up to self-esteem, no after-thoughts admitting and justifying inconsistency; all comes warm from the loving heart, and all the heart's love is kindled by the love of Christ."*

Tychicus, the companion of Onesimus, carried with him also a letter to the members of the church of Ephesus, among whom, as we have seen, Paul spent three years of active service, and over whom, therefore, he yearned with most affectionate solicitude. There was not, indeed, among them any special emergency to be met, or any local heresy to be exposed and refuted, and, therefore, he does not address himself to any particular object in which they were more interested than others; but as his epistle to the Colossians was written about the same time, and his mind was

* "How to Study the New Testament," by Dean Alford, vol. ii., pp. 241, 242.

full of the topics with which it is concerned, he very naturally discourses of these to the Ephesians. There is, in fact, between these two letters just that sort of resemblance which you find in thought and language between letters written on the same subject and about the same date by the same author. And yet there is a distinctive difference between the two. The one is particular, the other general; the one is fragmentary, the other systematic; and, whether it were written after the other or not, the Epistle to the Ephesians is the development of the principles which are insisted on in that to the Colossians. In the former he amplifies and elaborates the views which he could only touch on in the latter, because of the eagerness with which he sought to controvert the evils that had appeared among those to whom it was sent. This explains how it comes that, with so many verbal resemblances between the two, the one is so distinct from the other in what I may call the polarization of its thoughts. In the letter to the Colossians the leading topic is the person of Christ, because in that he found the antidote to all the errors which he wished them to refute. In that to the Ephesians the method seems to be determined by the great facts of redemption; and he enlarges on the electing, redeeming, and sanctifying grace of God. "The origin of the Church in the will of the Father; the course of the Church by the satisfaction of the Son; the scope and aim of the Church in its life in the Spirit; these," says Dean Alford, "run through the whole, dividing the epistle first into three larger portions, and then in these portions carrying out the same order in every paragraph. The whole is a magnificent apostolic comment on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as the divine persons are concerned in the work of our redemption."* Two of its illustrations are spe-

* "How to Study the New Testament," vol. ii., p. 256.

cially interesting, the one from its appropriateness to the Ephesians themselves, the other from its connection with the circumstances of the apostle when he wrote. The Ephesians dwelt in a city whose noblest ornament was the Temple of Diana, reputedly the most splendid specimen of Ionic architecture which the ancient world contained; and there can be little doubt that Paul was thinking of that imposing structure when he wrote these words: "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* Again, when the apostle wrote or dictated this letter, he had been for probably more than three years in daily contact with Roman soldiers. For two years at Cæsarea he had been kept in military custody. During his voyage he had been on an intimate footing with the centurion Julius, and after his arrival at Rome he had made many friends among the pretorian guards. Now, though, as we have seen, he embraced the opportunity thus furnished him for teaching the Gospel to the soldiers, we are sure that he also availed himself of the facility thus afforded him for acquiring information concerning military accoutrements and discipline, and the use to which he turned that knowledge is apparent in these verses: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the hel-

* Eph. ii., 20–22.

met of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* Thus, like his Master, Paul drew his illustrations from the objects that were before the eyes of his readers, and from the experiences through which he was daily passing; and so his words were full of the liveliest interest as giving distinctness to his thought, and making it memorable.

The last of the epistles of the imprisonment that remain to us was that to the Philippians, which must be dated near the close of the two years' residence at Rome to which Luke refers.† This is evident from the references which it makes to Epaphroditus, as well as from those which it contains to the results of Paul's labors in the imperial city. It appears that Epaphroditus had come to Rome from Philippi bearing a present, probably of money, from the brethren there to the apostle. It is further evident that while he was at Rome Epaphroditus was prostrated by an illness which, for a time, filled the heart of Paul with anxiety. Now, as the apostle speaks of this beloved brother as having been "full of heaviness," because the Philippians had heard of his sickness,‡ it follows that some communication had gone from Rome to Philippi concerning him, and also that some report had been brought back again from Philippi to Rome. But, in those days of comparatively slow travel, that would require some months; and so, if we allow that Epaphroditus first came to Rome near the end of the first year of Paul's imprisonment, then the second year must have been considerably advanced before he set out on his return with this letter. Again, the effects from Paul's efforts among the

* Eph. vi., 13–17.

† Farrar, following Lightfoot, makes the letter to the Philippians the earliest of the four; but his arguments do not shake the position taken by others like Alford, Ellicott, and Meyer.

‡ Phil. ii., 26.

soldiers were such as needed time for their development. From the nature of the case they could not have been immediate, for they were the consequence of patient, plodding perseverance from day to day in dealing, not with large audiences but with individual men. So we are constrained to date this letter as near as possible to the end of the second year of Paul's imprisonment. And when we have arrived at that conclusion we have at once an explanation of the uncertain manner in which he refers in it to the issue of his appeal. In writing to the Colossians and Ephesians he says that he has sent Tychicus to them that he might "comfort their hearts." That meant that he could cheer them by telling them of his comparative welfare, and of his hope of release. But in this letter to the Philippians he is not sure whether Christ is to be magnified in his body by life or by death.* Now, when we remember that Burrus, the good prefect, died about the end of the second year of his imprisonment,† and that Nero was just then under the influence of Poppæa, who had become a Jewish proselyte, and had already favored the Jews so far as to plead for them against Agrippa, we may understand this change in the apostle's forecast of the immediate future, and how it came that his hopes as to the result of his case began to sink, and he found himself in that singular dilemma, in a strait betwixt two, yet having a desire to depart and be with Christ. But although there is such uncertainty as to the issue of his appeal, there is no abatement of his joy of heart in Christ, nor any shrinking in his spirit from the ordeal of martyrdom. This is at once the tenderest and the cheeriest of his letters. He loved the Philippians very earnestly. They had been very kind to him. They had, in the

* Phil. i., 21.

† Lewin puts the death of Burrus in A.D. 62. See Lewin, ii., 361.

main, walked after his ensample. No teacher of error had obtained a foothold among them, and so his words to them are mostly those of commendation; or if he does refer to the fact that there were some even among them who were "enemies of the cross of Christ," he does so with tears and in a spirit of gentleness.* For the rest, all he can say to them is "stand fast;" nay, that is not all, for again and again he bids them "rejoice;" and when he assures them that "the peace of God will keep their hearts and minds" as the result of simple, prayerful, and grateful trust in God, we cannot doubt that he is reading to them from the record of his own experience. The sunshine of God's favor illuminates every page of this precious letter; and if, in addition to its doctrinal importance, that to the Galatians is specially valuable for the information which it furnishes in regard to the external facts of the apostle's life, this is unspeakably dear to us for the glimpses which it gives us into his heart.

Thus have I sought to set before you some particulars of interest in regard to each of these four letters. I have put them in their true biographic setting, without attempting anything like a formal analysis, far less a running exposition of their contents; but yet knowing full well that an acquaintance with the facts which I have mentioned will enable you more clearly to understand and more thoroughly to appreciate the treasures of wisdom which they contain. And now, before we part, let me give expression to one or two thoughts of a practical sort, suggested by our subject for this evening.

Observe, then, in the first place, the converging of circumstances which, under the providence of God, brought Onesimus and Paul together in Rome. The apostle had most

* Phil. iii., 18.

probably known Philemon as a visitor to him when he was living at Ephesus, and had then learned to take an interest in him and in the church in his house; but we cannot tell whether or not he then came into contact with Onesimus. We may be sure, however, that whether the slave ever saw Paul or not, he would be permitted and encouraged to attend on the religious services which were regularly held under his master's roof. Yet he was not converted then. On the contrary, he grew worse, and to escape the consequences of theft he made his way to Rome. There he fell, somehow, into the hands of Paul, and through him was converted. Now, how frequently similar cases have occurred! I am reminded especially of the conversion of Augustine. He had gone astray into vicious indulgence and ruinous error, and pierced the heart of his mother with many a sorrow. But she continued to pray for him; and learning that he was about to leave Carthage, she extracted a promise from him that he would not go. That pledge, however, being dishonestly given, was speedily broken, and he went to Rome, greatly to her distress, since her main hope for him lay in her influence over him. Still she continued to make supplication for him, and at length, passing from Rome to Milan, he was there converted to the faith. So, not seldom, one running away from restraint is met by the grace of the Lord Jesus and sent back a new creature. It may be that there is here to-night—who can tell? God knoweth—some poor runaway, who, in a freak of adventure, or fit of temper, or under the influence of some sudden temptation, has fled from his father's house and come to this great city. Let the history of Onesimus come home to him now. Ah! you cannot run away from God. He has overtaken you here; and the wonderful thing is, that he is here in mercy and not in judgment, in love and not in punishment. Will you open your heart to him now, and, trans-

formed by the renewing of your mind, will you not go back to your earthly home, to gladden it with the evidence that you have been born again?

Observe, in the second place, the wisdom with which Paul managed this difficult case. He sent back Onesimus, but he did so in such a way as to give no sanction to slavery; for he asked that he should be received as a brother—nay, as Philemon would have received the apostle himself. That last qualification carried in it a condemnation of the whole system of slavery; while the sending of him back at all saved Paul from coming into collision with the Roman law. If he had directly opposed slavery he would have provoked the bondsmen to rebellion, and brought his own usefulness at once to an end; for just at the date at which he was writing Pedanius Secundus was killed by one of his slaves, and in accordance with the law the whole number of slaves belonging to him, amounting to a vast multitude, and including many women and children, were put to death, although they were confessedly innocent of all participation in the crime.* Now, a fact like that shows the state of the law and the temper of the times in regard to slavery; and therefore Paul, viewing it as a result of something behind itself, endeavored to deal with the cause, confident that when that was removed the effect would cease. But is he on that account to be regarded as a partisan of slavery? Nay, verily. He did here as in other cases. He dealt in positive principles, and left them to make their own way. He did not denounce slavery, but he enforced Christian brotherhood, and that was the most effectual means of expelling slavery. He did not grasp at paltry results because they were near and immediate; but he put the leaven of Christian love into the mass, heedless of the fact that it

* See Howson, vol. ii., p. 390, *note*.

was hidden there for the time, but confident also that it would work its way out until every slave on earth shall be set free. In a similar spirit let us endeavor to counteract the evils of our times. That which seems the shortest way to a reform is oftentimes the longest in the end; and the surest means of success will be found in the wise enforcement of those great principles of love, and liberty, and holiness which centre in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, we may observe here how much the grace of the Lord can do to sustain his servants in tribulation. Paul was a prisoner, yet his heart was full of peace; and the joy which he commended to others was constantly experienced by himself. There is no whimpering in these letters, but instead the calm assurance of one who knew that for him "to live" was "Christ," and "to die" was "gain." Nor was it his gift of miraculous inspiration that held him up. He was supported by that gracious aid which is offered to us as freely as it was to him, and which may be possessed by us as fully as it was by him. To show you that this is indeed the case, let me place before you a specimen of what I may call the prison literature of the Christian Church. I pass over the age of the first persecutions and begin my search at the era immediately preceding the Reformation. The noble Savonarola, whose name has given to Florence a grander lustre than the glory of the Medicis, during his month of imprisonment before his execution wrote his commentaries on the thirty-first and fifty-first psalms, which show that, though he had much spiritual conflict, neither his faith nor his comfort yielded.* The gentle Anne Askew, who was burnt at Smithfield for holding that in the Lord's Supper the bread after consecration remained bread,

* Mackenzie's "Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography," vol. iii., p. 729.

wrote, on the night before she suffered, that beautiful poem which contains these lines:*

"Like as an armed knight
Appointed to the field,
With this world will I fight,
And faith shall be my shield.

"Faith is that weapon strong
Which will not fail at need;
My foes therefore among
Therewith will I proceed.

"I now rejoice in heart,
And hope bids me do so,
That Christ will take my part
And ease me of my woe."

The valiant William Tyndale, to whom more than any other one man we owe our English Bible, wrote, during his imprisonment at Vilvorde, to the governor of the castle, asking for some articles of dress, in a style that reminds us of Paul's request that Timothy should bring his cloak from Troas; and then goes on to say, "But above all I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the procureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with my study."† Thus to the last he upheld himself by the performance of the work to which he had dedicated his life, and the Bible that we read to-day was in great part the fruit of his imprisonment. Ridley, who stood at the stake with Latimer, wrote, in the interval between his condemnation and execution, a long "farewell to all his true

* "Our Christian Classics," by Dr. James Hamilton, vol. i., pp. 45, 46.

† "Life of Tyndale," by Demaus, p. 476. Eadie's "The English Bible," vol. i., 211.

and noble friends in God," which contains these sentences: "I warn you all, my well-beloved kinsfolk and countrymen, that ye be not amazed or astonished at the kind of my departure or dissolution, for I assure you I think it is the greatest honor that ever I was called unto in all my life. For you know I no more doubt but that the causes wherefore I am put to death are God's causes and the causes of truth, than I doubt that the gospel which John wrote is the Gospel of Christ, or that Paul's epistles are the very Word of God."* And only a short time before, the Lady Jane Grey, in sending, on the eve of her execution, her Greek Testament to her sister, wrote: "I am assured that I shall for the losing of a mortal life find an immortal felicity, the which I pray God grant you and enable you of his grace to live in his fear and die in the true Christian faith, from the which, in God's name, I exhort you that you never swerve, neither for hope of life nor fear of death."† The well-known hymn beginning "Jerusalem, my happy home," was, in one of its many versions, composed by Francis Baker while a prisoner in the Tower of London;‡ and in the same fortress, in a cell which is still shown to visitors, Sir Walter Raleigh composed his "History of the World," and wrote some poems, of which the following lines may be taken as a specimen:§

"Rise, O my soul, with thy desires, to heaven,
And with divinest contemplation use
Thy time, where time's eternity is given.
And let vain thoughts no more thy thoughts abuse,
But down in midnight darkness let them lie;
So live thy better, let thy worse thoughts die.

* "Our Christian Classics," vol. i., p. 63.

† Ibid., vol. l., p. 49.

‡ "Hymn-writers and their Hymns," by S. W. Christophers, p. 118.

§ "Evenings with the Sacred Poets," by Frederick Saunders, p. 223.

"And thou, my soul, inspired with holy flame,
View and review, with most regardful eye,
That holy Cross, whence thy salvation came;
On which thy Saviour and thy sin did die;
For in that sacred object is much pleasure,
And in that Saviour is thy life, thy treasure."

Everybody knows that John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" was the fruit of his labors in Bedford jail; and as the joy-bells of the New Jerusalem kept ringing in his ears he forgot the vileness of the "cage" wherein he was confined. Not so well known, at least on this side of the Atlantic, are the letters of Samuel Rutherford, so unique for their "unction and holy rapture, breathing a spirit of such devotion as if he had been a seraph incarnate, and filled with such transport as if he had been caught up to the third heaven." Yet many of them were written from Aberdeen, to which city he had been confined by the Court of High Commission. George Wither, the Puritan poet, whose quaint motto was, "I grow and wither, both together," had a checkered career, and many of his best pieces were composed while he was in prison. One of them, entitled "A Prison Meditation," has preserved his experiences for us. I give only two stanzas from it:

"While here I bide, though I unworthy be,
Do thou provide all needful things for me;
And though friends grow unkind in my distress,
Yet leave not thou thy servant comfortless.

"So, though in thrall my body must remain,
In mind I shall some freedom still retain;
And wiser made by this restraint shall be
Than if I had, until my death, been free."*

Who has not heard of the hymns of Madame Guyon in sim-

* "Hymn-writers and their Hymns," p. 129.

ilar circumstances? or who, having once read, can ever forget these thrilling lines:

"My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul."

James Montgomery, whose hymns have often borne our hearts in loving devotion up to God, wrote a whole volume of "Prison Amusements" while he was confined in York Castle, the victim of political injustice; and the hymn beginning "Spirit, leave thy house of clay," was composed by him in the same place, on the occasion of the death of one of his fellow-prisoners, who with seven others had suffered the loss of all worldly goods, for conscience' sake. And, to mention no more, what an interesting record is that of the imprisonment in Burmah of the sainted Judson for two years, during which he solaced himself with Christian songs, and composed the beautiful paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer commencing "Our Father God, who art in heaven!"

Now, I have not brought these instances before you merely as a matter of literary interest, but I wish you to take note of the cheerful tone which pervades them all; and then, when you have done that, I will ask you to read the melancholy lines written by the Roman poet Ovid during his banishment; and the letters of Cicero during his exile. Of these last one of the biographers of the great Roman orator says it would have been better for his reputation if they had been burnt; and another avers that they show a "pusillanimity which it is humiliating to contemplate."* The same thing has come out in the prison experiences of

* See Forsyth's "Life of Cicero," vol. i., pp. 240–248.

many others in modern times who, being "without God," were also "without hope" in the world. Now, how shall we account for this difference? Simply by the sustaining grace of the Lord Jesus. There is no other adequate explanation. One of the greatest triumphs of modern horology is the construction of a chronometer with a compensation balance which keeps it moving at the same rate in every temperature. What that balance is to the timepiece the grace of God is to the believer's heart. It gives him equanimity in all experiences. It makes prosperity safe, and adversity salutary for him. It puts for him a rainbow into every cloud. It opens for him a fountain in every wilderness. It gives to him a song for every night. Why, then, should we refuse the blessing which it brings?

XXVIII.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.—SECOND IMPRISONMENT AND MARTYRDOM.

THE letters to Timothy and Titus have many things in common. They were called forth by the imperfectly organized condition of the first Christian societies, and were addressed by Paul to those whom he had associated with him in the work of planting and training the early churches. They belong to the same stage of ecclesiastical development; there is great similarity of style between them; and there is a recurrence in them all of the same forms of expression. These things combine to make it morally certain that they were all produced about the same date; and as the references to his approaching martyrdom contained in the Second Epistle to Timothy fix the writing of that near the close of his career, it follows that all the three must be regarded as belonging to the last stage of the apostle's history. But when we come to the question when his career did close, we encounter the difficult problem of the second imprisonment, to which it is indispensable that we give some attention.

It is universally admitted that Paul was put to death at Rome as the result of a judicial trial before Nero. But it is contended by some that his execution was the consequence of his appeal from Cæsarea. These critics hold that, although in the early part of his imprisonment he was treated with great leniency, yet he was afterward condemned without having had any opportunity of leaving the city

from the time of his first arrival in it till that of his martyrdom. Others, however, believe that at the end of the two years referred to by Luke* the apostle was set at liberty, and that, after some time spent in travelling and preaching both in the East and in the West, he was again apprehended under some plausible charge, taken to Rome, condemned and executed, near the close of the reign of Nero. After patient investigation of the arguments on both sides I have adopted the last-mentioned opinion, and I will try to set before you now, as clearly and briefly as possible, the reasons which have mainly led me to this determination. They are connected with particular statements in the letters to which to-night our attention is to be directed; and you will have the best conception of their importance if we take them in order.

Turn with me, then, to the first chapter of First Timothy, and at the third verse you will read, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia"—a clause which implies that, shortly before this letter was written, Paul and Timothy had been together at Ephesus, and that Paul, having to leave for Macedonia, besought Timothy to remain behind him for a special purpose. Where, then, can we put this simultaneous presence of Paul and Timothy in Ephesus, followed by the departure of Paul into Macedonia, and the continued sojourn of Timothy at Ephesus? Very clearly we find no place for it in the history recorded in the nineteenth chapter of The Acts; for though we read there of Paul's leaving Ephesus for Macedonia, he then sent Timothy on before him,† "but he himself stayed in Asia for a season." It is supposed by some, indeed, that after Paul had arrived in Macedonia he sent Timothy back to Ephesus; but, not to insist on the obvious fact that send-

* Acts xxviii., 30. † Acts xix., 22.

ing him back to the city is different from beseeching him to abide still in it, there is evidence that Timothy was with Paul all through his journeyings in Greece and Macedonia at that time, for he is mentioned in the salutation of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which was written then; and he is expressly named among those who accompanied him on his voyage from Greece to Cæsarea.* We cannot, therefore, put this request to Timothy to remain in Ephesus into the history covered by Luke's nineteenth chapter of The Acts. Moreover, it is exceedingly improbable that it could have been made before the date of Paul's interview with the Ephesian elders at Miletus. Two considerations lead us to that conclusion: first, the fact that the apostle's address on that occasion contains no allusion to the labors of Timothy at Ephesus, as it would almost certainly have done if they had been performed before that date; and second, the important item that the condition of the church of Ephesus, described in the Epistle to Timothy, is very different from that indicated in the discourse at Miletus. In the latter, indeed, the apostle refers to troubles; but they were troubles that would arise, and not heresies and immoralities that had arisen. In the former, however, we are made to feel that the great reason for Timothy's abiding in Ephesus was that he might counteract evils that had recently developed themselves among the disciples there. That which was prophecy in the address had become history before the letter was written; and so we are constrained to date the time when Paul left Timothy behind him in Ephesus after the meeting with the elders at Miletus. But if we put it after that interview, there is no place for it at all, unless we find one for it in the era after his two years' imprisonment at Rome. For from Miletus he went to Jerusa-

* Acts xx., 4.

lem, whence he was taken as a prisoner to Cæsarea, in which for two years he was held by Felix, and from which he was forwarded to Rome. Clearly, therefore, we must infer that if he ever visited Ephesus subsequently to his interview with the elders at Miletus, such a visit must have been made after his two years in Rome.

There are only two objections to this view which have importance enough to justify allusion to them. The first is founded on the apostle's strong language at Miletus: "Now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more;"* which, it is alleged, furnishes conclusive evidence that he never afterward visited Ephesus. But that may be taken merely as the expression of a dark presentiment; and, if it be so regarded, there is no difficulty in supposing that it was falsified by the event. In any case we have another saying, equally strong, in his letter to the Philippians, on the other side, which must have been falsified if he was never set at liberty, for thus he writes: "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."† We have thus a choice between the two; or rather the two balance each other, and leave us to settle the question entirely on other grounds. The second objection springs from the fact that, in the first letter to Timothy, Paul speaks of his son in the faith as still a young man—so young a man, indeed, that there was need of the exhortation, "Let no man despise thy youth;" whereas if these words were not written till the year 67 or 68, Timothy must have been thirty-four or thirty-five years of age.‡ But to this we reply that youth is a relative term; and that, considering the work with which he was intrusted, Timothy even at thirty-five could not but be regarded as young. He

* Acts xx., 25. † Phil. i., 25. ‡ See Howson, vol. ii., p. 552.

was to exercise control over the elders and superintend the election and ordination of new office-bearers; and all who know, or have had experience of the jealousy with which, alike in Church and State, those are still regarded who are simply guilty of what Pitt once sarcastically called "the atrocious crime of being a young man," will quite understand the pertinence of Paul's words to Timothy, even if we admit that he had attained the age of thirty-five.

There is not much, therefore, in either of these objections; and the evidence in behalf of the view we have adopted is vastly increased when we open the Second Epistle to Timothy. By common consent that is regarded as the latest of Paul's letters. When he wrote it he had been already once before the imperial court, and had been acquitted on the first charge brought against him; but he had no expectation of being ultimately set free, and was daily looking martyrdom in the face. Now, we have in it references to journeys as then recent, which we cannot identify with any of his travels before his apprehension at Jerusalem. Look, for example, at these words:* "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Now, if this was sent during an imprisonment which lasted from his seizure at Jerusalem until his execution at Rome, then it is easy to show that Paul had not been in Troas for at least six years before the date at which he was writing, and as, during that interval, many of his friends with whom he was in constant communication had been going to and fro between Europe and Asia, it is marvellous that he should not have received these articles long before. If, however, we suppose that he was released from imprisonment, and then went to Philippi, Troas, Colosse, and Ephesus, as from many hints let fall

* 2 Tim. iv., 13.

in his letters, considered by us in our last lecture, he evidently meant to do; and if he was again apprehended after that journey and carried to Rome, the whole thing becomes natural.

Look, also, at these words:* "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Now, if he wrote thus, during that imprisonment of which we have the beginning in the book of The Acts, then it becomes impossible to reconcile the statement here made with the account which Luke has given of his travels; for the last time Paul was at Miletus before his apprehension at Jerusalem was when he met the elders of Ephesus there; and though Trophimus was certainly present on that occasion, he was not left behind him sick, but went up along with him to the Holy City; for it was the sight of him with Paul in the city which made the Jews suppose that he had taken Gentiles into the Temple, and provoked the riot which was put down only by the intervention of the chief captain of the castle.† Hence the time when Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick must have been distinct from, and subsequent to, that when he met the Ephesian elders there; and if so, it must be placed after his release from Rome, since it cannot be put anywhere between his farewell to the elders and his arrival at Rome.

The arguments drawn from these definite statements in the letters to Timothy are greatly strengthened when we look at the condition of things in the churches which they indicate. It is clear that a great change had come over the Asiatic Christians as regarded their feelings toward the apostle, for he says,‡ "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Now, if his imprisonment continued unbroken, and no visit was paid by him to Asia after he wrote his letters to the Colossians and

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* 2 Tim. iv., 20. † Acts xxi., 29. ‡ 2 Tim. i., 15.

Ephesians, it becomes impossible to account for this alteration or rather alienation. But if, on visiting these churches, he found false doctrines promulgated, and immoral practices indulged in, by prominent individuals among them; and if he sternly rebuked those who were guilty of such disloyalty to Christ, we can easily understand how it came that Phygellus, Hermogenes, and the rest had turned away from him. It is to be remembered, also, that such a visit to Asia seems to have been contemplated by him when he wrote the epistles of the imprisonment. Thus he says to Philemon,* "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you" and to the Philippians,† "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." It thus appears that it was his intention to visit the cities of Asia after he was released; and that in these churches, as described in the epistles to Timothy, there were such changes as such a visit alone could account for, so that we are led to the conclusion that he was released, and carried out the purpose which he had formed regarding them.

The same inference is suggested by the passage in Titus i., 5, "For this cause left I thee in Crete." Thus Paul writes to Titus in Crete shortly after he himself had been with his coadjutor there. Now, remembering that this letter confessedly belongs to the latest stage of the apostle's history, we ask with confidence where we can find a place for this visit to Crete, unless we believe that it was made after his release from imprisonment, and before he was again apprehended? So, without regard to tradition, and solely on the ground of the evidence which may be distilled from the pastoral epistles themselves, I have adopted the view that, shortly after the time at which Luke's narrative in The Acts

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* Philem. 22. † Phil. ii., 24.

concludes, Paul was set at liberty by Nero; and that after an interval of four or five years' duration he was again carried to Rome as a prisoner and put to death.

As to the doings of the apostle in this interval between these two imprisonments we have to rely entirely on the hints which we get from the letters to Timothy and Titus; and any theory regarding them must be mainly conjectural; but the view of Dean Alford commends itself to me as exceedingly probable. That painstaking investigator says, "We suppose the apostle on his hearing and liberation, which cannot have taken place before the spring of the year A.D. 63, to have journeyed eastward, visiting perhaps Philippi, which lay on the great Egnatian Road to the east, and passing into Asia. There, in accordance with his former desires and intentions, he would give Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis the benefits of his apostolic counsel, and confirm the brethren in the faith; and there perhaps, as before, he would fix his head-quarters at Ephesus." Other journeys — among them, perhaps, that to Spain — seem to have occupied three or four years. From Ephesus, leaving Timotheus there, he went into Macedonia, where some think the First Epistle to Timothy was written; "but the words, 'I besought thee to remain in Ephesus, as I went into Macedonia,' seem to show that the sojourn in Macedonia was over, and that he was now elsewhere—where we cannot presume to say. In some place, evidently,* where he was likely to be detained beyond his expectations, which circumstance strengthened his desire to send this letter of warning and exhortation and direction to his son in the faith."†

On this epistle it is not necessary for me to enter at any

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* 1 Tim. iii., 14, 15.

† Alford's "Greek Testament," vol. iii.; "Prolegomena," p. 95; "How to Study the New Testament," vol. iii., p. 38.

length. Paul writes in it throughout as an old man. We do not find in it the passionate intensity which there is in that to the Galatians, or the systematic arrangement which characterizes those to the Romans and Ephesians; but he writes with informal earnestness about those matters in which he was most deeply interested, and which he had committed to the care of Timothy. His allusion to his past history are not numerous, but they are just such as we should expect a man verging toward the limit of threescore years and ten to make. What, for example, could be more touching than the references in the first chapter to his early life, and the mercy shown him in his conversion to Christ? or what more suggestive of his paternal care over Timothy than his counsels to him in the matter of his health? Every thoughtful reader will note in it the tender affection of Paul for Timothy; the earnest solicitude which he felt for the welfare of the Church of Christ upon the earth; the jealous watch which he kept over the great central truths of the Gospel; the signal wisdom which he manifested in the advice which he gives to Timothy alike for the regulation of his own personal conduct and for the guidance of the Church; and the solemn iteration with which before God and the Lord Jesus he charged the young evangelist to observe everything which he enjoined. No young man can peruse it without coming into contact with great principles which are as important to-day as when they were first expressed; and no minister of the Gospel can neglect it, without depriving himself of much that is invaluable for the right discharge of the duties to which he has been set apart. Nay, in an age when charity in the faith is in danger of degenerating into latitudinarianism, and liberty in the Church seems by many to be developed into license, we may all learn valuable lessons from this pre-eminently practical and plain-spoken letter.

Somewhere about the time at which this First Epistle to

Timothy was written Paul seems to have made a visit to Crete in company with Titus. Judging of his character from the tenor of Paul's letter to him, Titus would appear to have been one of the shrewdest and most trusted of Paul's fellow-laborers; but it is somewhat surprising that we should have so little direct information concerning one who stood so high in the confidence of the apostle. We hear of him first at Jerusalem;* the next time he comes into prominence he is the messenger of Paul to Corinth at a critical juncture in the history of the Church in that city;† and now he is referred to as intrusted by the apostle with the perfecting of the organization of the churches there by the ordination of elders in every city. In the Second Epistle to Timothy‡ he is mentioned as having left Paul; and as his name with those of others occurs in connection with the mention of Demas, it is supposed by some that he deserted the apostle, and is blamed by them accordingly. I cannot bring myself to adopt any such view. He had not, perhaps, the tenderness of heart which so endeared Timothy to Paul, but he had a more self-reliant spirit, and was apparently well-fitted for the work which Paul had left him in Crete to perform. The churches there must have been in an embryonic, if not also a chaotic state; and the letter of Paul to Titus contains instructions for their complete arrangement, and directions for his own conduct, as well as a thorough condemnation of the errors in doctrine and evils in practice which had made their appearance among the converts to whom he ministered. It is nervous in style, slightly rugged and abrupt in expression, and signally decided in tone. It is, besides, comprehensive in its scope; for, brief though it be, it contains maxims of importance for all ages, and abounds in epigrammatic phrases as pungent as they are wise. It is like

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* Gal. ii., 3. † 2 Cor. ii., 13; vii., 6. ‡ 2 Tim. iv., 10.

all Paul's letters in the prominence which it gives to the Cross of Christ; and if any one imagines that zeal for doctrine is fatal to good works, we commend to him the study of this pithy epistle.

It was probably written from some place in Asia Minor; but, in any case, when Paul despatched it he intended to go to Nicopolis* for the winter. There were many cities of that name in the ancient world; but the general opinion is that Paul refers to that in Epirus, which was founded by Augustus in commemoration of his victory at Actium. It may be said to have arisen out of the ruins of the surrounding cities, whose inhabitants were compelled to migrate to the new capital. It was made a Roman colony; and so, as a citizen of Rome, the apostle would be more secure from violence there than he would have been in some other places, though, just because it was a colony, he would be also more open to direct hostile assault from parties plotting against him in the metropolis.

Here, as it seems to me, we must put the Epistle to the Hebrews, if we adopt the opinion—to which I own I am inclined—that it was written by Paul. It is anonymous, and has been ascribed to Luke, to Apollos, and to Barnabas as well as to Paul. The question is not one of pre-eminent importance, because the canonical authority of the letter is generally conceded even by those who are inclined to disbelieve that it was written by Paul; and all are ready to admit that its spirit and arguments are distinctively Pauline, so that, as Howson has put it, "it represented the views, and was impregnated by the influence, of the great apostle."† It must be granted that in some respects it is very different from the acknowledged writings of Paul; but then, on the other hand, it is evident to every student that in the struct-

* Titus iii., 12.

† Howson, vol. ii., p. 515.

ure of its main argument; in the manner in which the writer reasons from the Old Testament; and in the importance which he attaches to the grace of faith, it is nearly akin to some of Paul's well-accredited letters, notably to that to the Galatians. I do not undertake to dogmatize on a question on each side of which great and worthy names are arrayed; but, taking it for granted that the epistle is the work of Paul, I may give a simple summary of its contents. It is addressed to Hebrew Christians who, under the pressure of persecution—which, however, had not yet been unto death—were tempted to apostatize from the Gospel and go back to Judaism. To show them the folly of such a course, the writer dwells on the superiority of Jesus to the angels, through whose instrumentality the law was given; to Moses, who was the mediator of the old covenant; and to Aaron, who was the high-priest of the former dispensation. Under the last of these heads he demonstrates the pre-eminence of the priesthood of Christ, from the consideration of the order to which it belonged; the sanctuary in which it is exercised; the victim which it offered; and the perpetuity by which it is distinguished. Then, having thus fortified his position, he enlarges on the folly and danger of going back from the real to the typical, and after an eloquent historical illustration of the nature and effects of faith, and a consolatory chapter on the benefits of affliction, he concludes with a series of pertinent practical exhortations. The letter gives us the key for the unlocking of the meaning of the ancient ritual, and shows us how Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it; while the passage on faith forms a beautiful companion to that on love in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and that on hope in the eighth chapter of the Romans; so that, taken together, they bring before us the three abiding graces of the Christian character.

But now we approach the last chapter in the great apos-

tle's life, and we find him again a prisoner in Rome; but he is in closer custody than before, for by this time the Christians had fallen on evil days and evil tongues in the imperial city. The members of the new sect were no longer confounded, as at first, with the Jews, for through the unscrupulousness of Nero a terrible distinctness had been given to them in the popular mind. In the summer of A.D. 64 a fearful conflagration, which lasted for days together, destroyed a large part of the metropolis, and Nero, who had been accused of having set fire to the city, threw the whole blame of it upon the Christians. The whole story is told by Tacitus, who says: "But neither these religious ceremonies, nor the liberal donations of the prince, could efface from the minds of men the prevailing opinion that Rome was set on fire by his own orders. The infamy of that horrible transaction still adhered to him. In order, if possible, to remove the imputation he determined to transfer the guilt to others. For this purpose he punished with exquisite torture a race of men detestable for their evil practices, by vulgar appellation called Christians." Then after a statement about Christianity which shows how little its character was known as yet by the cultured Romans, he continues: "Nero proceeded with his usual artifice. He found a set of profligate and abandoned wretches, who were induced to confess themselves guilty; and on the evidence of these men a number of Christians were convicted, not, indeed, upon clear evidence of their having set fire to the city, but rather on account of their sullen hatred of the whole human race. They were put to death with exquisite cruelty; and to their sufferings Nero added mockery and derision. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and left to be devoured by dogs. Others were nailed to the cross; numbers were burnt alive; and many, covered over with inflammable substances, were lighted up when the day de-

clined to serve as torches during the night. For the convenience of seeing this tragic spectacle the emperor lent his own gardens. He added the sports of the circus and assisted in person, sometimes driving a curricle, and occasionally mixing with the rabble in a coachman's dress. At length the cruelty of these proceedings filled every breast with compassion. Humanity relented against the Christians; for it was evident that they fell a sacrifice not for the good of mankind, but to glut the rage of one man alone."* These barbarities had been perpetrated some considerable time before Paul went to Nicopolis; but still, even then, as a leader of a sect which had been accused of such a crime as the burning of Rome, he would be most obnoxious to those in authority, and any pretext would be sufficient for his apprehension. We cannot tell where he was seized, or for what: we only know that when he wrote his second letter to Timothy he was again a prisoner—this time, however, under accusation as an evil-doer,† and under circumstances of greater hardship than before. So rigid, indeed, was his seclusion, that it was only after diligent search that Onesiphorus was able to discover him;‡ and so bitter was the cold to which he was exposed in his place of confinement—said by tradition to be the Mamertine—that he earnestly desired the cloak which he had left in the warmer climate of Troas.§ Most of his companions were away. Demas had deserted him on some personal and worldly errand. Crescens and Titus had gone on urgent missions, the one to Thessalonica and the other to Dalmatia. Tychicus had been sent to Ephesus. Only the ever-true and tender Luke‖ was with him. Timothy was in Asia Minor, and

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* Murphy's "Tacitus, Annals," ch. xv., p. 44.

† 2 Tim. ii., 9.

‡ 2 Tim. i., 16, 17.

§ 2 Tim. iv., 13.

‖ 2 Tim. iv., 10, 11.

the heart of the venerable man of God went out in longing after him, so that he wrote this touching letter, urging him to come to him as soon as possible. And yet, even as he made that request, it was doubtful to him whether his dear son in the faith would reach the city in time to see him. Already he had been before the court on the first accusation which had been brought against him; alone, he had stood before the bar—and yet not alone, for, unseen by mortal eyes, his Lord was with him, and strengthened him so that he was delivered for that time. But he had no hope of ultimate release; and so he pours out his heart to his much-loved correspondent in a strain of tenderness rising evermore to one of transport. The letter was written on the threshold of the unseen—on the border-land of the life that is beyond —and though it has in it the same prominence of Jesus and his Cross, the same prudence in counsel, and the same uncompromising thoroughness in the condemnation of evil which we find in all his epistles, it is especially noteworthy for the references which it contains to his feelings under the circumstances in which he was placed. Let me quote a few of these: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love

his appearing. The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."* Comment on these words would only mar their force. Let them stand alone, in the sunlight of their own glorious trust!

We know not whether Timothy reached Rome in time to cheer the last hours of the apostle; but before many weeks had passed he was led out beyond the city walls on the road to Ostia; and there, within sight of that monumental pyramid which still stands to the memory of Caius Cestus, he fell before the headsman's sword. The dust of no nobler Christian hero sleeps beneath the sod. Time, that effaces from the records of humanity the names of other men, has only chiselled his into deeper relief; and the older the world grows, its inhabitants grow only more earnest and appreciative in their admiration of his character and work. In the systematizing of Christian doctrine, and the organizing of the Christian Church, he did, under the guidance of God's Spirit, more than all others—with the possible exception, so far as doctrine is concerned, of the Apostle John; and after his divine Master's, no influence has been more powerful than his in making and moulding the history of the Christian centuries. Uniting in himself on earth the apostle, the prophet, and the martyr,† he is now in heaven one of the leaders of that trinity among the redeemed—the glorious company, the goodly fellowship, and the noble army —who praise God in his temple. But why should I utter another word in this strain? What can my feeble "well done" add to the renown of him who, eighteen hundred years ago, received his commendation warm and living from the lips of his ascended Lord?

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* 2 Tim. i., 12; ii., 10–12; iv., 6–8, 18.

† See Howson, vol. ii., p. 505.

I have time now for little more than the mention of one or two reflections suggested by certain things which have come out in the course of our investigations this evening. And, in the first place, a comparison of the state of things in the Asiatic churches, as indicated in the epistles to Timothy, with that described in the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, will show how error entering in through the door of curious and useless speculation ultimately degenerates into immorality. They tell us in many quarters to-day that doctrinal soundness has no connection with practical holiness; but the study of these epistles will convince every candid reader that in religious declension one of two things is sure to happen. Either false doctrine will deteriorate character, or impure conduct will make shipwreck of the faith. They act and react on each other. Faith is the substratum of life; so that a man will be as he believes, and will believe as he lives. A disobedient life will ultimately undermine even a sound creed; for when a good conscience is put away, men will make shipwreck concerning the faith.* There is no security for us, therefore, save in humble faith in that which Christ has revealed to us, and cheerful obedience to that which he has commanded us. If the root of the tree die, then very soon every branch on it will wither; but on the other hand when even the topmost boughs begin to decay, that is evidence that the root is already affected with disease. Similar is the relation between doctrine and life; they are not so much two things as one, and both are influenced by that which vitiates either.

Again, the contrast between Onesiphorus, who sought Paul very diligently until he found him, and was not ashamed of his chain,† and the Asiatics generally, who had

* 1 Tim. i., 19. † 2 Tim. i., 16, 17.

turned away from him,* reminds us that adversity is the real test of friendship. When honors are flowing in upon us, and we have little need of kindness, many will make protestations of regard for us; but when the tide has gone down, and things are at the ebb with us, we shall discover that most of these professions have been forgotten, and that we are forsaken and almost alone. The men who, like swallows, come twittering round us in the summer of our prosperity, will mostly leave us in the winter of our affliction. But all are not of this fair-weather sort. Some, like Luke and Onesiphorus, will be faithful to the very last, and will come only closer to us because of our chain. These are friends indeed, because they are friends in need. Nothing winnows our friendships like a gusty trial; but blessed be God it is the chaff that is blown away. The wheat remains, to be to us the type and similitude of Him who is a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

For, finally, we may learn from Paul's last letter how true the Saviour is in our times of adversity. "At my first answer," says Paul, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."† He is never so near his people as when they are suffering for his sake; and the severer our hardships are the stronger always is his consolation. Behold how the experience of years gave an accumulated residuum of strength to the apostle's faith. When he journeyed to Damascus he cried, "Who art thou, Lord?" but when he was about to die, he exclaimed, "I know whom I have believed!" What a history lies between these two utterances! A certain degree of knowledge is needed to the exercise of intelligent faith; but then, the life of faith steadfastly maintained increases the knowledge, and that again gives ground for yet

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* 2 Tim. i., 15. † 2 Tim. iv., 16, 17.

stronger confidence. Paul proved the Lord at Damascus, and that gave him courage at Jerusalem; then he passed up and up through the Lystra assault, and the Ephesian riot, and the Cæsarea imprisonment, and the Maltese shipwreck, and his first experiences at Rome, until he reached that lofty landing-place whereon he contemplated martyrdom without a quiver. Not all at once, by one spasmodic and emotional bound, did he attain the serene altitude of this sublime assurance: he reached it after the climbing of a lifetime; and he reasoned that He who had been with him through thirty years of life, with their hardships and dangers, would not desert him in death. "I know whom I have believed!" Oh, it is a grand thing to know Christ well before we come to die, for then the last enemy is unstinged. Do you know him? If not, come now and acquaint yourself with him. Trust him from this good hour, that you may have daily experience of his grace, and the more of such experience you have the stronger will be your assurance in the end.

XXIX.

SUCH A ONE AS PAUL.

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."—1 *Cor.* xi., 1.

PAUL has repeatedly affirmed in his writings that he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and some may suppose that the injunction which I have just read is inconsistent with that assertion. But when we look narrowly into the words we discover that it is not to himself, so much as to the relation which he bore to his Master, that he here directs attention. Others may imagine that, as we have in Christ himself a perfect pattern, we need not concern ourselves with any lower ensample. But such an opinion betrays a shallow philosophy, and a meagre knowledge of human nature; for we require not only to have a perfect model, but also to be shown how we are to set about its imitation. Moreover, valuable as the example of Christ is, both from its perfection and its many-sidedness, it must not be forgotten that there are Christian experiences which find no precise parallel in any chapter of his history, and in which, therefore, we need just the kind of help which comes from the disciple, rather than from the Lord; or, to put it more correctly, which comes from the Lord through the disciple. Thus, there was nothing in Jesus corresponding to the great change which we call conversion; neither was there in him anything approaching to that inward struggle between the new man and the old, with which every believer is familiar. Now, it is here that the value of such an example as that of

Paul comes conspicuously into view; and we are not to be accused of putting the Master into the shade, while in this department we look at the servant. If we were to confine our attention to the servant, indeed, we should dwarf our spiritual growth; but, on the other hand, if we were to look at the Master, without reference to his servants and their strivings after his holiness, I fear that we might soon be overwhelmed with humiliation, or sink into despair. Looking at them both, however, we find that the necessities of our nature are fully met. In Christ we behold the perfect plan of the character which we have to build; in Paul we see the workman in the act of rearing it. In Christ we have the finished statue, with its exquisite proportions and its delicate lines of beauty; in Paul we have the sculptor hewing at the rude block of his daily life in the noble effort to reproduce its excellence. In Christ we have perfection; in Paul we have imperfection striving, by the help of God's Spirit, after the perfect. Hence, in looking at the servant we are in no danger of forgetting the Master, because the one great feature in the servant was the steadfastness with which he looked to the Master, and the earnestness with which he sought ever to attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Let us, then, bearing these things in mind, bring this series of discourses to a close, with an attempt to gather into one view the prominent qualities of Paul's character. I do not undertake to give you an outside portrait of the man, by describing to you his personal appearance, because, with all deference to those who think differently, I believe that there are no particulars certainly known about that. Neither do I seek now to analyze his intellectual abilities; since, in my descriptions of his addresses and epistles, I have already endeavored to set these before you with distinctness. But my concern at present is with his moral

qualities; and my aim will be to give such prominence to the chief of these as will help us at once to understand and imitate his greatness.

First of all, as lying largely at the root of his pre-eminence, I name his conscientiousness. Even before his conversion to Christianity this was the controlling principle of his character. "He reverenced his conscience as his king." When he believed that he ought to do anything, he went forthwith and did it. If you wanted to enlist him in any cause, all you had to do was to convince him that it was his duty to identify himself with it, and then his conscience carried him over to it. When he "persecuted the church of God and wasted it," he did so, not to glut any personal cruelty, or to gratify any private revenge, but because he verily believed he was doing God service.* When, again, he was convinced by the appearance of Jesus to him on the way to Damascus that he was fighting against God, he gave up in a moment his commission from the chief priests, and transferred his allegiance to Christ.† And all through his Christian career he acted invariably on the same principle. His was no vain boast when he said to the members of the Jewish council, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day;"‡ and again, to Felix, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."§ In the same spirit he wrote to the Corinthians, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."‖ And in his latest letter he says, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefa-

* Acts xxvi., 9–11. † Acts ix., 1–9. ‡ Acts xxiii., 1.
§ Acts xxiv., 16. ‖ 2 Cor. i., 12.

thers with a pure conscience."* Thus from first to last he acted from principle. He did always and only that which in his conscience he believed to be right. Nor was this accomplished by him without effort. He "exercised" himself to do it. The word is very strong. It is that which is employed to describe the exertions of the athlete to gain the prize; and its full force is, that he trained himself and strained himself with all his might to keep his conduct always abreast of his convictions. No matter what it cost him in the way either of effort or of sacrifice, he would hold a good conscience. Whether he lost a post of conspicuous political importance or was thrown into prison was, in his estimation, of small moment, in comparison with "the testimony of a good conscience."

Now, in all this he is worthy of our earnest imitation. The temptation of these days is to play fast and loose with conscience, and to act from motives of self-interest or self-indulgence, or on the extemporaneous impulse of emotion, rather than from moral conviction. There are, of course, both noble and numerous exceptions; but the tendency, I fear, is to sneer at the conscientious man as a tight-laced stickler, and to hold him in derision as a fool, if not to despise him as a narrow-minded bigot. The consequences of such a state of opinion are sure to be disastrous; for there is more to be feared from the dethroning of conscience in the hearts of the people, than from the setting up of some external evil in the midst of them. And, on the other hand, there is more hope of the man who is acting from conviction, even if he should be in the wrong, than there is of the unprincipled libertine. He is "not far from the kingdom of God;" and, acting up to the light which he enjoys, he will obtain more light. The horizon will widen as he ascends

* 2 Tim. i., 3.

the hill, and he will become clearer and more comprehensive in his views. The new revelation may not always come with such suddenness as it burst upon the apostle, but it will come; for if but the "eye" be "single," the whole body will ultimately be "full of light." Let this, then, be the first lesson we learn from Paul—always to be loyal to conscience. Let the deciding question on every occasion be with us, not will it pay? or will it please? or will it be safe? or will it bring honor? but is it right? "To the upright light ariseth in darkness;" and "if any man be willing to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

As a second quality of Paul's character, I name courage. But I do not mean by that term the physical bravery which is born with many men, and for which they are no more to be commended than for the color of their complexion: I mean, rather, the moral heroism which confronts all the consequences of doing right. Need I remind you of the many manifestations of that which we have seen in the life of our apostle? Immediately after his conversion he went into the Jewish synagogue to preach Christ; and, after a brief interval in Arabia, he returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, which was at the moment the very hot-bed of the persecution of which he had been himself an agent. He never paused to think what would become of himself before he entered upon the course which the Lord commanded him to take. When he was exposed to violent assault at Lycaonia, or to imprisonment at Philippi, or to the fury of the mob at Ephesus, he never attempted to purchase safety by a policy of trimming; and whether he stood before the Jewish council or the Roman governor, the effeminate Agrippa or the brutal Nero, he was always valiant for the truth. He did not care for consequences when he felt that he was right; and the claims of friendship or the appeals of

affection were as powerless to change his purpose as were the chains of imprisonment or the terrors of martyrdom. Listen to these ringing words to the Ephesian elders: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord."* It was true of him, as of Moses, that "he endured as seeing him who is invisible." He counted the cause of Christ, with all its reproach, as of infinitely more importance than his own safety; and, never conferring with flesh and blood, he cared not what became of his body so that Christ was magnified.

And yet there was nothing of rashness or bravado about his bearing. He was prudent as well as bold. He was cautious as well as courageous. He would not wantonly sacrifice himself; and once and again he stood upon his right of civil citizenship to save himself from outrage. He did not recklessly rush into needless danger; neither did he run into peril for display, that he might show how he could bear himself through it, as one makes an exhibition of his walking over the rope of wire that is stretched over the roaring cataract. If beyond the danger there was a work of love to be performed, which he could reach only by passing through the peril, then he did not hesitate for a moment. But he did not brave danger for the mere sake of braving it. He would not throw his life away for nothing, but kept his offering for the occasion on which such a sacrifice was necessary for the world and the Church; and when that occasion came, he met it calmly, saying, "I am now ready to be offered."

Here, again, we have an example worthy of our study and imitation. But in order to follow it fully we must get at

* Acts xx., 24.

the secret of that by which it was inspired; and, when we go deep enough, we find that in his faith. He had the firm persuasion that the Lord, though unseen, was always with him; and he believed that when his earthly life was over, he would be with his Lord. He lived for Christ, and therefore he was determined to lay himself out to the best advantage for his Lord. His death would be a departure to be with Christ; and therefore the world could not terrify him by threatening him with that. When you take in the full meaning of these statements, you will cease to wonder at Paul's courage; and perhaps also it will cease to be a marvel to you that you have so little of the hero about yourself, for faith is the germ of courage; and until we give the unseen preponderance over the visible, and the eternal supremacy over the temporal, we must be timid, vacillating and unreliable, the sport of every cunning one who knows how to work upon our fears.

But, as another distinctive feature of Paul's character, I name concentration of purpose and energy. Like him whose first recorded saying was, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* and whose life motto might have been, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work,"† Paul kept one aim steadily and clearly before him. In his personal conduct his absorbing ambition was to reach forward "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;"‡ in his preaching his determination was to know nothing among men "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;"§ and in his public life his one desire was to "finish his course with joy, and the ministry, which he had received of the Lord."‖ If we might select

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* Luke ii., 49. † John ix., 4. ‡ Phil. iii., 14.
§ 1 Cor. ii., 2. ‖ Acts xx., 24.

from his own writings a fitting inscription for his memorial, we should find it in the combination of these two expressions: "To me to live is Christ," and "This one thing I do."* From the moment of his conversion till that of his death "one increasing purpose" ran through his career, gathering volume and force as it ran; this, namely, that he might serve Christ, know Christ, and become like Christ; and everything which stood in the way of his attaining that was joyfully sacrificed. We have frequently seen this exemplified in his actions, and therefore I refer now to one or two illustrations of it which come out in his writings. Thus, drawing a parallel between himself and the competitors in the ancient games, he says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."† Again, he repels the charge of fanaticism thus: "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."‡ Very expressive is that word "constraineth." Literally the Greek term means "holdeth together;" and the idea is that the motive-power of love to Christ gathered all his energies together for and kept them at this, as the great engrossing aim of his being—the living to him who died for him and rose again. For this he gave up his Jewish preferences and privileges; for this he sacrificed all hope of worldly honor and political preferment; for this he left home, country, friends, and went from city to city preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God; for this he cheerfully endured his bonds and imprisonments, his

* Phil. i., 21; iii., 13. † 1 Cor. ix., 27. ‡ 2 Cor. v., 13–15.

perils on land and his dangers on the deep, his stripes at Philippi and his martyrdom at Rome. Christ burnt at the glowing centre of his heart, and the radiance illumined the outermost circumference of his life. What gravitation is in the physical universe, holding everything in its place, that the love of Jesus was in his soul, regulating the lowliest as well as the loftiest of his actions; and as the mechanist, in the construction of a watch, fits every smallest portion of the works, so that when all are combined each may contribute its own share to the great design of the whole in measuring and making manifest the time, so our apostle made the thoughts of his intellect, the emotions of his heart, and the efforts of life, subservient to "the furtherance of the gospel," both in himself and in the world. If ever man was in earnest, he was in earnest. Everything about him was intense. Festus might sneer at him as "mad," and his Corinthian antagonists might despise him as one "beside himself;" but his was the madness of a holy and intelligent zeal, the insanity of a benevolent and healthy enthusiasm. He saw within the veil, and spoke and wrote and acted accordingly.

Now here, again, he is to be held up for the mitation of modern Christians; for there is reason to fear that there is a great lack among us of this earnestness of concentrated enthusiasm. We scatter ourselves into little streamlets of effort after many objects, instead of gathering ourselves into one rushing river of energy in the following of Christ. We wish to be great in other departments than that of holiness. We seek to shine in learning, or business, or art, or science, or the like; and when the object of our ambition conflicts with the claims of Christ upon us, we leave following him, that we may secure it, much as if the runner in the course should stop to pick up some glittering pebble, and so lose the victor's crown. If you wish to kindle anything by the

rays of the sun, you must first collect them by the aid of a lens into a fiery point; and if you would have your Christian character glow with an ardor that will burn its way in the face of all resistance, you must first focus, by the power of love, your whole soul on the following of Christ. The late Mr. Arnot, of Edinburgh, tells that once while he was standing on the platform of a Scottish railway-station, waiting for the train—which had been at rest for a long while—to start, he overheard the following colloquy between a farmer and the conductor: "What are you waiting here so long for? Have you no water?" "Oh, yes," was the reply, "we have plenty of water, but it's no boiling."* Is not that a tolerably accurate description of the churches of to-day? We have abundance of intelligence. We have splendid machinery for carrying on our operations. We have large congregations listening to the proclamation of the truth. What lack we yet? We lack this intense, boiling earnestness which inspired the enthusiasm of Paul. We lack a new baptism of fire. Let us labor and pray more for that; for in the measure in which we secure it we shall be "followers of Paul, even as he also was of Christ."

But, as a fourth feature of Paul's character, I name that interblending of faithfulness in the reproof of evil with gentleness in the treatment of the evil-doer by which he was distinguished. You see how, in his letter to the Galatians, the indignation of his soul comes out against those who would tamper with the Cross of Christ, while at the same time he "travails in birth again" for his dear children, who were in danger of being injured by their efforts.† You remember also how, in writing to the Philippians, he denounces, but with tears, those among them who were the

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* "This Present World: Sketches from Nature and Art," by William Arnot, p. 83.

† Gal. iv., 19.

enemies of the Cross of Christ;* and you cannot have forgotten how he warned the Ephesians "night and day with tears."† So, again, he says that among the Thessalonians he was gentle as a nurse cherishing her children;‡ while in his letter to the Philippians his heart wells up with tenderness as he styles his friends "dearly beloved and longed for."§ He followed his own precept, and had "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reproved them;‖ yet in his rebuke he was affectionate to those who had erred, and anxious lest they "should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."¶ How considerate also he was for the weak brethren, lest they should be injured by lack of thoughtfulness on the part of those who were strong!**

Now, here we have a rare combination of qualities apparently inconsistent; and, if we had more men so endowed in the churches to-day, the effect of their presence would immediately appear in an increase of their purity, their progress, their peace. We are too apt to bite and devour one another. We reprove sin so as to drive away the offender, rather than bring him back to Jesus; and in the assertion of our own liberty we become forgetful of the weakness of others, so that their hearts are wounded and their spirits crushed. But these things ought not so to be. Let us study more than ever Paul's lyric on love, and, under the inspiration of his example, let us imbibe its spirit, so that we too may crown charity as the queen of the graces, not simply in the Church without, but in the heart within. "I had as lief," said Richard Baxter, "be a martyr for love's sake as for truth's;" and there was real magnanimity in his words. But we need not be disloyal to truth in order to keep allegiance to love. All that is required is that we

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* Phil. iii., 18. † Acts xx., 31. ‡ 1 Thess. ii., 7.
§ Phil. iv., 1. ‖ Eph. v., 11. ¶ 2 Cor. ii., 7.
** Rom. xiv.; 1 Cor. x.

recognize the difference between truth and opinion, and be careful not to elevate a personal preference to a level with an eternal verity. There are many among us who will fight for crotchets and argue for prejudices; but how few are willing to be silent about such things for love! What does it matter how a man pronounces Shibboleth? Is he not a man by simple virtue of his speech? What does it signify how or whom a man baptizes? Does not his baptism into Christ betoken his desire to be loyal to the Lord? And so with other minor matters of difference. Things are better in this respect among us than they were even a very few years ago, but there is room for improvement still; and that improvement will come when we take in the full significance of the apostle's words: "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

But, passing on, I name as a prominent characteristic of Paul his devout humility. He never sought his own glory. On several occasions, indeed, he stood, as one may say, upon his dignity, and declared that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles;"† but he did so at these times because the purity of the Gospel and the liberty of the Church, as well as the supremacy of the Lord Jesus, were all assailed through an attack on his apostolical authority. His adversaries sought to stab the truth through his personal position; and therefore, painful as it was, he felt compelled to assert his equality with any of those who had been the companions of the Lord. Usually, however, he kept himself in the background; and, like John the Baptist, he was willing to decrease, if only thereby Christ should increase. It is interesting, also, to mark how his humility seems to have grown as he advanced in life. Thus, in his first letter to the Corinthians, which was written from Eph-

* 1 Cor. xiii., 13. † 2 Cor. xi., 5; xii., 11.

esus, he calls himself "the least of the apostles;"* in that to the Ephesians, which was produced some six years later, during his first imprisonment, he speaks of himself as "less than the least of all saints;"† and in his first letter to Timothy, which belongs to the last stage of his earthly history, he uses these words: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."‡ Thus, as his character grew in other respects, it grew also in humility. As he advanced in holiness he advanced in that constituent element of holiness which we distinguish as humility. As he increased in his knowledge of Christ he increased in his hatred of sin; and so the evil that remained within him, though it was less absolutely than before, was felt more keenly by him than the greater evil of former years had been. The tree that grows the tallest sends its roots most deeply into the soil. The bird that soars the highest builds on the ground its lowly nest. The flower of sweetest fragrance is the modest violet that blooms beneath the hedge. So the holiest saint is also the humblest. Let us learn, then, in this particular, of Paul, even as he learned of his Lord. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."§

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* 1 Cor. xv., 9. † Eph. iii., 8. ‡ 1 Tim. i., 15.
§ Phil. ii., 3–8; 1 Pet. v., 5.

I might have dwelt, as a further characteristic of Paul, on his prayerfulness; but I content myself with the mere mention of a spirit which was common to him with all his brethren. Very noticeable, however, as an indication of his kindliness of disposition, is the wide scope of his intercessions for others, as these come out in his epistles.* When one stands in the operating-room of the Western Union Telegraph Company he is at a centre from which he can communicate almost with the extremities of the earth; and in a similar manner, but by a subtler agency than electricity, the apostle's closet was the head-quarters from which unseen influences went, by way of the mercy-seat, to his friends in Palestine or Italy, in Greece or Asia Minor; and one secret of his success as a preacher was in the fervor and particularity of these prayers.

The same affectionateness of heart is evinced in the salutations to his friends in which his epistles abound. He never forgot a kindness; and the fact that throughout his first imprisonment he was ministered to by so many loving friends is a proof that he possessed that tender love which is the truest magnetism. Was there ever more touching devotion shown by one man to another than that of Luke to Paul? And what a tribute to the apostle's gentleness it is that a man like Luke should have given up his earthly ambitions for the one purpose of serving Christ by attending on him! Again, that Paul could inspire and maintain such attachment as that shown to him by Timothy, is an evidence that he was as great and as winning in the little things of daily life as he was in the more important matters connected with the organization of the Christian Church. The proverb says that "no man is a hero to his valet;" but

* See Rom. i., 9; 1 Thes. iii., 10; Eph. i., 16., iii., 14–21; Phil. i., 4; Col. i., 9; Philem. 4.

those who were nearest Paul and knew him best had the most exalted estimate of his heroism; and they might have said, perhaps, that he was nowhere so great as in the genial, confidential *abandon* of his fellowship with his familiar friends.

It needs to be added that, exalted as Paul was, he was, after all, what he described himself to the inhabitants of Lycaonia—"a man of like passions with ourselves."* He had his faults, some of which, like those of Peter, were in the near neighborhood of his excellences. There was about him a certain fiery vehemence of temper—akin to that manifested by Moses in his early days—which flashed out occasionally with lightning-like rapidity and effect. He had also a kind of intolerant scorn of anything like moral cowardice, which kept him sometimes from sympathizing, as he might otherwise have done, with the weak and backsliding; though he was always ready to acknowledge the first symptoms of penitence in them. He was, withal, extremely sensitive; and so he was as much wounded by a slight as he was gratified by a kindness. But, take him for all in all, he was a noble man; and if we compare the world as it was when he was converted with the state in which he left it at his martyrdom, and then reflect how much his writings have had to do with the progress which we can trace through the past eighteen centuries, we shall see reason to affirm that no one mere man has done so much for the world and the Church—or rather, perhaps, I ought to say, for the world through the Church—as Paul.

But now we must tear ourselves away from that theme, which for so many months has grown in interest under our hands; and if I may measure the profit of my hearers by the benefit which I have myself derived from the prepara-

* Acts xiv., 15.

tion of these discourses, we shall all have reason to rejoice. In the memoir of Dr. Andrew Reed, famous throughout Great Britain, and not unknown in America, for his noble efforts in founding institutions for the care of idiots, orphans, incurables, and others similarly afflicted, there is a touching section which tells how, when he was a little boy, he was taken by one of his parents to St. Paul's Cathedral and shown the statue of John Howard, the great philanthropist, which had then been only recently erected. His mother made the visit instructive by telling him the story of the man who travelled through Europe visiting the prisons of its different countries, and gave his life at last a sacrifice for the benefit of those who were immured within their cells. Young Reed never forgot that visit. The seed of truth sown by his mother's explanation of that marble memorial of the prisoner's friend sprung up at length, and bore fruit in those splendid charities with which his name will always be associated. During the months of this ecclesiastical year I have been leading you through the cathedral of Paul's life. I have shown you the memorial, more enduring than marble or bronze, reared in the Book of God to his worth. I have tried to communicate to you my own enthusiasm in the study of his character. May God grant that some of this seed also may drop into your hearts, and become the germ in you of earnest effort for the glory of God and the welfare of men in connection with the Gospel! And if, in after-time, some who now hear me, or have listened to this series of discourses, shall trace the beginning of new life, or the broadening and deepening of Christian character in them to our study of the experience, work, and writings of the great apostle, I shall be abundantly rewarded. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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